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# MIXER

127  
JUNE/JULY  
2009

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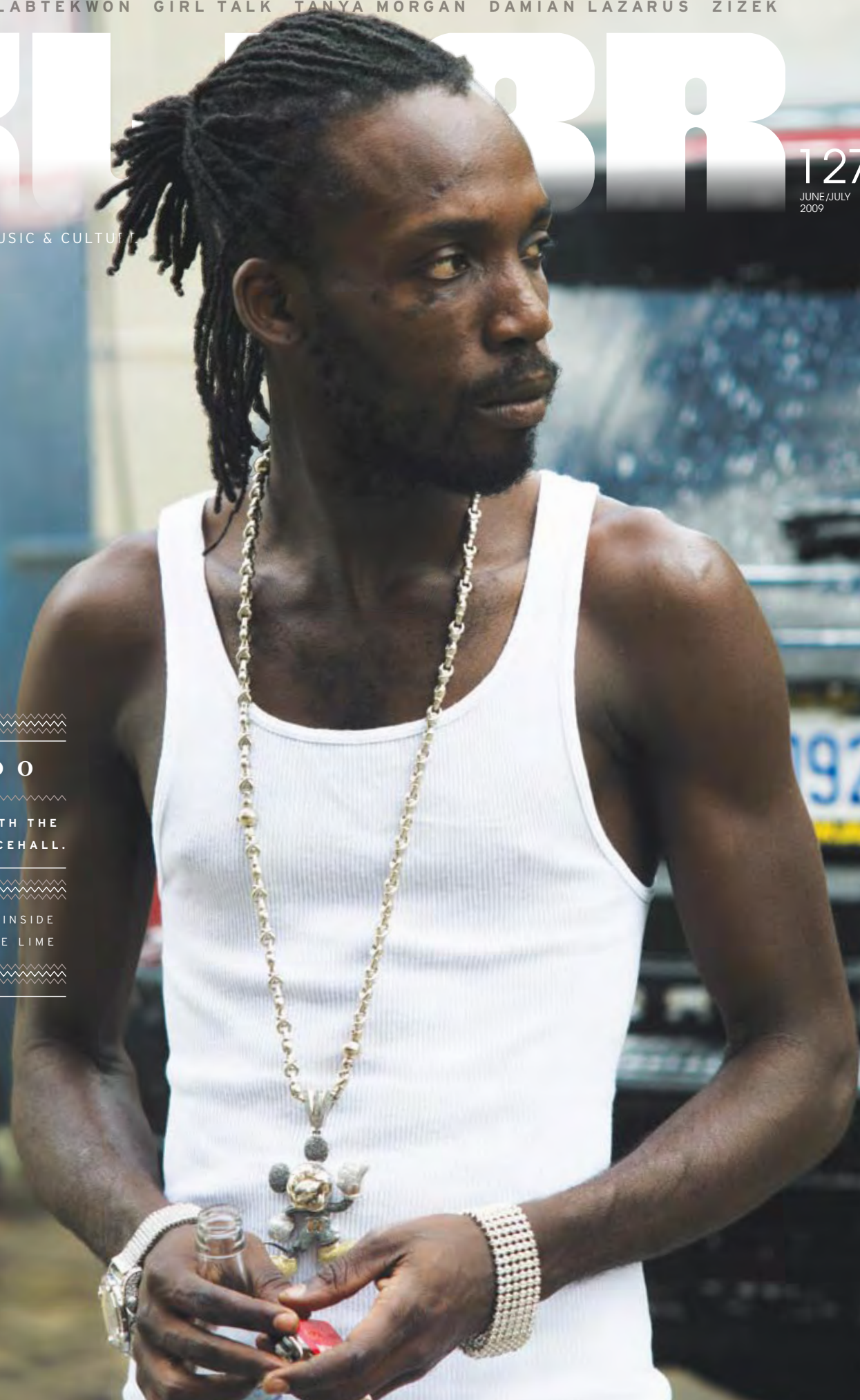
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## NO 127

TANYA MORGAN	14
XRABIT ON <i>PAUL'S BOUTIQUE</i>	16
CHASE & STATUS	18
DAMIAN LAZARUS	20
GIRL TALK	28
MAVADO	34
LABTEKWON	44
MEANDERTHALS	48
PARTY OUT OF BOUNDS	52
STYLE: THE LIGHT	62
REVIEWS	73
ARTISTS TO WATCH	78
IN THE STUDIO: MEDASYN	80
ARTIST TIPS: WHOMADEWHO	82
COMPONENTS	84
VIDEOGAMES	86
VIS-ED: JULIEN VALLÉE	88
TBC: TEKNOPOLIS	96



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## ED'S RANT: ONE HOT SUMMER



ZIZEK'S VILLA DIAMANTE AND FRIENDS EAT *BONDIO* SANDWICHES IN BUENOS AIRES.

**IT'S A FACT:** The *XLR8R* office (at least the San Francisco chapter) is obsessed with Miami freestyle. We always have been, but when the summer months hit, it's funny how the weather brings two hearts together (I mean, mine and Lisa Lisa's). Sunny jams like "Spring Love" and "Funky Little Beat" are just the ticket for getting us through another office move and psyching us up for July's Freestyle Explosion tour (which may result in one killer upcoming *XLR8R TV* episode, if we have our way).

We couldn't help but let that sunshine feeling seep into to every nook and cranny of this issue—our totally tropical summer trip. Understand, though, that the Tropics are a state of mind more than a point on a map. Hell, you'll even find that the chilly confines of Helsinki has its own pockets of hotness, which we scope out with the Top Billin crew in our first ever Party Out of Bounds feature. We also grabbed food and siesta time in Buenos Aires with the Zizek crew's Villa Diamante, scoured Toronto's Queen Street West with Thunderheist, and checked out some low-profile techno hotspots in the Big Apple with DJ Derek Plaslaiko.

But where it got real hot was down in Kingston, Jamaica, where dancehall's favorite son, Mavado, waxed rhapsodic to Oakland scribe Eric K. Arnold about his new album, his upbringing in the church, and how we need 100 more Barack Obamas if we want peace in the world. That said, if you just want some peaceful Balearic sounds, you'd do right to find yourself Meanderthals' *Desire Lines*, the new collab between London weirdo-house dons Idjut Boys and Oslo's slow-motion disco king Rune Lindbaek. Andy Beta gives us the full rundown on the threesome on page 48.

When it comes to musical states of mind, Labtekwon has pretty much got the market cornered for mind-altering hip-hop. Writer Jesse Serwer hit the road from Brooklyn to Baltimore to chat with the space-jammer sometimes known as Omar Akbar Young. Along the way, he got an earful about Lab's eight million side-projects and his constant drive to move forward (even if it's just through a heavily guarded parking lot).

Truth be told, the *XLR8R* crew has been traveling all over as of late, and one of our favorite North American hotspots to visit (at least in the warmer months) has always been Montreal. This month, we check in with MUTEK founder Alain Mongeau on the occasion of the Montreal-based festival's 10th anniversary. (Keep your eye on *XLR8R TV* in the weeks to follow for even more slices of that birthday cake.) As well, Vivian Host gets the goods on French-Canadian iconoclast Julien Vallée in Vis-Ed, as he bends paper to thrilling effect.

Back in the U.S., Get Physical signee Damian Lazarus tools around the Hollywood hills, talking Willy Wonka and wonky house tracks with Tony Ware, while Girl Talk's Gregg Gillis gives us a lesson on how to party properly. So if Debbie Deb and Stevie B. don't do the trick for you this summer, maybe Gillis' advice of strapping in with a Gatorade Rain and a *Sandlot* DVD will.

—Ken Taylor, Editor

## XLR8R

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Vivian Host (vivian.host@xlr8r.com)

### EDITOR

Ken Taylor (ken.taylor@xlr8r.com)

### ART DIRECTOR

Tim Saputo (tim.saputo@xlr8r.com)

### REVIEWS EDITOR

Shawn Reynaldo (shawn.reynaldo@xlr8r.com)

### VIDEOGAMES EDITOR

Ryan Rayhill (ryan.rayhill@xlr8r.com)

### ONLINE MANAGING EDITOR

Jennifer Marston (jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com)

### PRODUCER, XLR8R TV

Kerry McLaughlin (kerry.mclaughlin@xlr8r.com)

### EDITORIAL INTERNS

Lulu McAllister, Chris Sabbath

### DESIGN INTERN

Elizabeth Brown

### XLR8R TV INTERNS

David Burgis, Stephanie Neptune

### STAFF WRITERS

Eric K. Arnold, Derek Beres, Joe Colly, Matt Earp, Rob Geary, Derek Grey, David Hemingway, Max Herman, Ethan Holben, Justin Hopper, Josiah Hughes, Brandon Ivers, Luciana Lopez, Cameron Macdonald, Fred Miketa, Tomas Palermo, Dave Segal, Jesse Serwer, Evan Shamoan, Patrick Sisson, Janet Tzou, Tony Ware, Rico Washington

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tyra Bangs, Michael Byrne, Allura Dannon, Ali Gitlow, Andy Hermann, August Howard, Connie Hwong, John S.W. Macdonald, Doug Morton, Tim Saputo, Eric Smillie, Roger Thomasson, Walter Wasacz

### STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

Martei Korley, Morgan Howland, Paul O'Valle, Dustin Ross, Ragnar Schmuck, Mathew Scott, Christopher Woodcock

### CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Martin Cotton, Pablo Espinoza, Vivian Host, Paula Iannuzzi, Marley Kate, Jeffrey Lowy, Tim Saccenti, Mathew Scott, Josh Sisk, Pablo Sujoluzky

### STAFF ILLUSTRATORS

Chuck Anderson for No Pattern, Derek Morris for Trophy, Colin Strandberg for The Work Steady

### CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATORS AND STYLISTS

Liz Baca, Peter Boardman

### ON THE COVER

Mavado, shot in Kingston, Jamaica by Martei Korley

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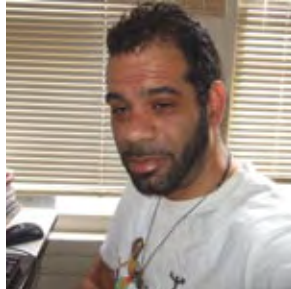
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**ERIC K. ARNOLD**



Bay Area-based music writer Eric K. Arnold got hella busy, penning June/July's cover story on Jamaican rude boy Mavado and August's forthcoming In the Studio write-up on hip-hop/electronic producer Trackademicks. A longtime contributor to *XLR8R*—his first cover story, on graffiti/design legend Futura 2000, appeared nine years ago in issue #50—Eric has also written for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Vibe*, *Wax Poetics*, *SF Weekly*, *XXL*, *The Source*, and the *Village Voice*, and has recently mastered the art of sandwich-making.

**CHRIS SABBATH**



The product of a chance meeting between a clown-for-hire and a record-store clerk, *XLR8R* editorial assistant Chris Sabbath spends most of his time watching episodes of *21 Jump Street* and eating way too many nachos. He prides himself on the fact that he knows how to play every David Lee Roth-era Van Halen song on air guitar. He has a weird obsession with cats and thinks 1990 was "a cool year." He's also a regular contributor to the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**SPARROW v. SWALLOW**



Sparrow v. Swallow is a creative studio focused around the work of Phillip Fivel Nessen, a Vermont native now living in Harlem, NY. Phillip has created design work for an extensive list of editorial, institutional, and corporate clients. He is currently working on an art project that examines the interpretation of sounds from various field recordings. He illustrated our feature on the Idjut Boys and Rune Lindbaek (a.k.a. Meanderthals) for this issue.

[sparrowvswallow.com](http://sparrowvswallow.com)

**MARLEY KATE**



Photographer Marley Kate was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and currently resides in Manhattan, where she studied at New York University and The School of Visual Arts. With a focus on fashion and beauty, Marley is able to capture a sense of playfulness and energy in her photos. Her style is luscious and ethereal, and her dream is lofty yet simple: to shoot fashion for the magazines, websites, and brands she admires most. She photographed this issue's "The Light" fashion feature in Miami with stylist Liz Baca.

[marleykate.com](http://marleykate.com)

**XLR8R**

**PUBLISHER**

Andrew Smith ([andrew.smith@xlr8r.com](mailto:andrew.smith@xlr8r.com))

**ADVERTISING MANAGER**

Ethan Holben ([ethan.holben@xlr8r.com](mailto:ethan.holben@xlr8r.com); 212-226-4553)

**ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVE**

Carol Gillard ([carol.gillard@xlr8r.com](mailto:carol.gillard@xlr8r.com); 212-239-4554)

**EVENTS AND ONLINE MARKETING MANAGER**

Shawn Reynaldo ([shawn.reynaldo@xlr8r.com](mailto:shawn.reynaldo@xlr8r.com))

**ADVERTISING AND MARKETING INTERN**

Stephanie Neptune

**ACCOUNTING MANAGER AND SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Sally Mundy ([sally.mundy@xlr8r.com](mailto:sally.mundy@xlr8r.com))

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**

Jennifer Marston ([jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com](mailto:jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com))

**OPERATIONS CONSULTANT** Michael Prommer

**CO-PUBLISHER** Arias Hung

**ADVERTISING:** Dial 415.861.7583, fax 415.861.7584, email [advertising@xlr8r.com](mailto:advertising@xlr8r.com), or mail *XLR8R* Magazine, 3180 18th St. #207, San Francisco, CA 94110

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Domestic: \$20 (one year, 10 issues) and \$40 (two years, 20 issues); Canada: \$40 (one year) and \$80 (two year); all other international: \$50 (one year) and \$100 (two years). Subscribe by credit card online or send payment to *XLR8R* Subscriptions, 3180 18th St. #207, San Francisco, CA 94110. Payment made out to "XLR8R Magazine," US funds only. International orders must be paid by credit card or international money order. Questions? Email [service@xlr8r.com](mailto:service@xlr8r.com) or subscribe online at *XLR8R.com*.

**CIRCULATION:** Newsstand distribution through Curtis Circulation. For direct retail sales, contact Jennifer Marston at 415.861.7583 x226 or [jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com](mailto:jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com).

**CONTACT US:** San Francisco HQ: 3180 18th St. #207, San Francisco, CA 94110; New York Office: 114 Bowery, Suite #206, 10013, New York, NY 10001; [letterbox@xlr8r.com](mailto:letterbox@xlr8r.com), fax 415.861.7584

**BIG THANKS TO:** Tiffany Mea at VP, Josh at Warp, Jessica Linker, Kate Jackson at Sub Pop, Anna Finch at Quiksilver, Jho Oakley, Derek Plaslaiko, Rachel Quizon at Incase, Alexandra Greenberg at MSO, JR at Biz 3, Karmaloop.com, Joakim @ Tigersushi, Alastair Duncan, Lauren Rodgers at RVCA, and VitaCoco coconut water. Aaaa!



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**XLR8R TV**



**MUTEK AND MORE**

In May, we took a trip to Montreal for the 10th anniversary of the MUTEK festival. And while we were being wowed by the intensity of North America's finest electronic music event, we also took a quick detour to peek into the home studio of abstract bass beat-maker **Chistain Poirier**. We also caught him and **Face-T** tearing it up at a not-to-be-missed Radio-Canada taping.

See all the madness at [XLR8R.com/tv](http://XLR8R.com/tv), and come back every Tuesday for new episodes, including recent shows with **Throbbing Gristle's Genesis P-Orridge**, **Four Tet**, and **Tiga**.

**NEW CONTENT EVERY DAY AT XLR8R.COM**

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**XLR8R'S TASTE OF THE TROPICS CONTEST**

Get 'em while they're hot—new tunes from Mavado, Meanderthals, and Prefuse 73.

Now that the pesky winter season has finally packed up its bags for its annual, and unfortunately short-lived, hibernation, the thought of cruising down to the tropics sounds like just what the doctor ordered. The mouthwatering cocktails, the steel drums, the chiseled, tan bods—as the great Solomon Burke once said, "It don't get no better than this." For this month's contest, we'll award five lucky winners a taste of the tropics with a pair of hot albums from cover star Mavado (*Gangster for Life: The Symphony of David Brooks* and *Mr. Brooks...A Better Tomorrow*, both on VP Records), and copies of Meanderthals' *Desire Lines* (Smalltown Supersound) and Prefuse 73's *Everything She Touched Turned Ampexian* (Warp). All you have to do to get your hands on these goodies is answer this one question:

**Tell us the name of your dream beachside concert blowout and the five artists you would want to see headline it.**

Contestants with the best answers will receive a copy of the four CDs listed.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email, and must be received by July 30, 2009. Send your entry to: XLR8R's Taste of the Tropics Contest, 3180 18th St. #207, San Francisco, CA 94110 or email [contest@xlr8r.com](mailto:contest@xlr8r.com) with "XLR8R's Taste of the Tropics Contest" in the subject line.



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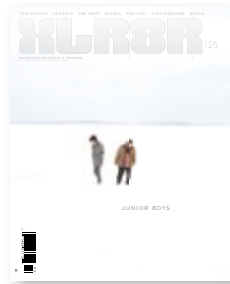


**THE LONG LOST, N5MD, KEVIN SAUNDERSON**

This month, our old friend Daedelus drops in with his wife Laura Darlington (as **The Long Lost**) to lace us with some crunchy new jams. Also check out **Buck 65's** A to F podcast, where the Nova Scotian hip-hopper also known as Rich Terfry (who recently teamed up with chanteuse Joëlle Phuong Minh Lê for **Bike For Three!**) takes us through the first half of his record collection while relaying tales of all sorts throughout.

Then stay tuned for a of Oakland IDM label **n5md**, as they showcase tracks from SubtractiveLAD, Funckarma, and more. Get your lethal dose of *XLR8R*'s favorite music and sign up for our weekly podcast at [XLR8R.com](http://XLR8R.com), where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum, including new sets from **Junior Boys** and **Kevin Saunderson**.

[XLR8R.COM/PODCAST](http://XLR8R.com/PODCAST)



**MARCH  
NO.125**

Cinematic inspirations from The Junior Boys

Extended interview between Pop Levi and Sparks

*XLR8R* TV episodes with Dan Deacon, Black Milk, Arnaud Rebotini, and Mi Ami

An exclusive Circlesquare podcast

More from our Primary fashion shoot

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**APRIL/MAY  
NO.126**

Pics from Oslo's By:Larm Festival

Interview excerpts with DJ Sprinkles, The Prodigy, Salem, and Clare Rojas

An exclusive podcast from The Juan MacLean

[XLR8R.COM/126EXTRAS](http://XLR8R.com/126EXTRAS)



**LOOK FOR THE XLR8R.COM EXTRAS ICON**

This issue is filled with online extras, including extended interviews, photo outtakes, audio clips, and videos. See them at [XLR8R.COM/127EXTRAS](http://XLR8R.com/127EXTRAS)



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**B.J. "BITTER" BASTARD:  
GONE TROPICAL**

Forget Sno-Cones and weenie roasts. This summer, it's island time. Mimosas for breakfast, Sex on the Beach for lunch... *if you know what I'm saying.* No bras, just coconuts. DJ Harvey and Daniele Baldelli and Crazy Cousinz mixtapes on the hi-fi, pineapple-flavored rolling papers, and monkeys in

togas feeding me grapes on the lanai. While you sit there on your dusty baseball diamond, eating Togo's and listening to Weezer with the ball sweat soaking through your American Apparel gym shorts, I will be sunning on the beach of my mind, letting waves of consciousness lap at the shores of my amygdala,

congas and marimbas playing ever so gently in the background while I watch ghost pirates pilot their parrot-masted vessels over the high seas. And, should you lily-livered, swine-flu-scarred nerdbombers care to join me here in paradise, here's a short list of the "do"s and "don't"s of living tropical.



**EXOTIC HERBS WAFTING IN THE BREEZE**

- |                                    |                                                  |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TROPICAL</b>                    | <b>NOT TROPICAL</b>                              |
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| <b>BILLY OCEAN</b>                 | <b>BILLY CHILDISH</b>                            |
| <b>FREELoADING</b>                 | <b>DOWNLOADING</b>                               |
| <b>USING A COMPASS</b>             | <b>HAVING A MORAL COMPASS</b>                    |
| <b>U.K. FUNKY HOUSE</b>            | <b>THE WORD "FUNKY"</b>                          |
| <b>PIÑA COLADAS</b>                | <b>PBR'S</b>                                     |
| <b>SPANK ROCK</b>                  | <b>NINJASONIK</b>                                |
| <b>STAYING COOL</b>                | <b>ACTING COOL</b>                               |
| <b>BURAKA SOM SISTEMA</b>          | <b>SYSTEM OF A DOWN</b>                          |
| <b>BALEARIC BEATS</b>              | <b>BLARING BEATS</b>                             |
| <b>GAY ZEBRAS</b>                  | <b>GAY BEARS</b>                                 |
| <b>TODDLA T</b>                    | <b>TODDLA T'S HAIR</b>                           |
| <b>SCORPION BOWLS</b>              | <b>THE SCORPIONS</b>                             |
| <b>KAREN O</b>                     | <b>JENNY LEWIS</b>                               |
| <b>SPUDS MACKENZIE</b>             | <b>DOG THE BOUNTY HUNTER</b>                     |
| <b>JAMAICA, THE ISLAND NATION</b>  | <b>JAMAICA PLAIN, THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN BOSTON</b> |
| <b>TRIBAL DRUMS</b>                | <b>TRIBAL TATTOOS</b>                            |
| <b>8 P.M. SUNSETS</b>              | <b>8 A.M. WAKE-UP CALLS</b>                      |
| <b>CLOWNFISH</b>                   | <b>INSANE CLOWN POSSE</b>                        |
| <b>BOB BARKER</b>                  | <b>TRAVIS BARKER</b>                             |
| <b>POPOZUDAS</b>                   | <b>POPOL VUH</b>                                 |
| <b>STRING VESTS</b>                | <b>STRING QUARTETS</b>                           |
| <b>DJ HARVEY</b>                   | <b>DJ HARDY HARD</b>                             |
| <b>KONONO NO. 1</b>                | <b>THE HORRORS</b>                               |
| <b>TOO MUCH BOOTY IN THE PANTS</b> | <b>TOO MUCH JUNK IN THE TRUNK</b>                |
| <b>ZOMBIES</b>                     | <b>VAMPIRES</b>                                  |
| <b>SHAKERS &amp; CLAPS</b>         | <b>QUAKERS &amp; SHACKS</b>                      |
| <b>TOMS</b>                        | <b>TOM FROM MYSPACE</b>                          |
| <b>JUNGLE</b>                      | <b>DRUM &amp; BASS</b>                           |
| <b>MR. FINGERS</b>                 | <b>TREASURE FINGERS</b>                          |
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| <b>CRANK DAT SUPERMAN</b>          | <b>BEING CRANKY</b>                              |
| <b>EATING BANANAS</b>              | <b>GOING BANANAS</b>                             |
| <b>GOING BONKERS</b>               | <b>EATING BONKERS</b>                            |
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# TANYA MORGAN

A NONE-TOO-GIRLY TRIO GIVES BIRTH TO A HIP-HOP FANTASY WORLD.



**“THERE’S A QUIRKY KIND OF EDGE TO US,” SAYS VON PEA, OFFERING HIS BEST EXPLANATION FOR TANYA MORGAN’S SELF-CREATED MYTHOLOGY.** Take the group’s name; seemingly devised on a whim, it refers to a woman that doesn’t exist. The three say they hail from Brooklynati; much like William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County, it’s an imaginary hometown that pays homage to the group’s dual stomping grounds of Brooklyn and Cincinnati. At their website, brooklynati.com, a hip-hop geek’s fantasy is brought to glorious life, with mythical locales such as Yancey Park, Questo’s Instrument Shop, and Tiggalo’s House of Worship.

*Brooklynati*, the group’s new album, arrives three years after their 2006 debut, *Moonlighting*. On that first release, Von Pea, Donwill, and Ilyas drew effusive praise from the OkayPlayer crowd for their zippy, off-the-cuff rhymes; their unpretentious approach to hip-hop seemed to capture the art form’s playfully musical essence. But *Moonlighting* sold fewer copies than expected as Loud Minority Media’s then-distributor, onetime Bay Area rap giant ABB Records, folded. Loud Minority has since re-organized under a new name, Interdependent Media, giving Tanya Morgan a real shot at indie rap fame.

On *Brooklynati*, co-produced by Von Pea and beat-maker Brickbeats, the group tries to fulfill that promise with lush hip-hop soul and cameos from Phonte, Blu, and many others. “*Moonlighting* was essentially the demo tape that got us a record deal to make *Brooklynati*,” says Donwill, who explains that Tanya Morgan worked on *Brooklynati* for three years. Instead of relying on first-take vocals, the group re-recorded tracks to draw out their best performances. “We employed a technique that a lot of rock artists use—and I don’t know if rap artists do it like that—[where] we went in and re-did all the songs, because we understood that this was a time capsule.” He compares the process to “having a baby.”

*Brooklynati* contains excellent nerd-rap fiction—one of the album’s highlights stars “Hardcore Gentlemen,” a made-up group that mimics the overwrought growling of early ’90s horrorcore acts—and plenty of real-life drama, with rhymes about surviving as starving artists (“Plan B”) and arguing with flaky concert promoters over money (“Don’t U Holla”). Tanya Morgan still performs the crazy freestyle sessions that made *Moonlighting* so great: Check “Never Secondary,” a cipher with their Lessondary crew. But the group’s zany, freewheeling spirit seems more tempered this time around, perhaps a result of seeing the industry as insiders instead of, as Ilyas puts it, “from the outside looking in.”

“Conceptually, this album is about life,” he says. “When you listen to the songs, there’s a lot of narrative—like, ‘What if I didn’t have a record deal?’ or ‘These promoters are shady,’ or even, like, ‘Now that we put out an album, you’re [automatically] going to want another album because the internet is so saturated with music.’ It’s about life in 2010.”

• *Brooklynati* is out now on Interdependent Media. [myspace.com/tanyamorgan](http://myspace.com/tanyamorgan)





# HELLO, BROOKLYN

Techno-crunk producer **Xrabit** finds hope in the form of The Beastie Boys' not-so-instant classic *Paul's Boutique*.



**SUMMER 1989. I WAS 14, AND COASTING THROUGH A HOT MUNICH SUMMER OF GRAFFITI, PARTIES, AND BOOZE.**

I was already obsessed with hip-hop culture—the soundtrack to our lives was a mixture of RUN-DMC, Public Enemy (*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* only came out the year before), and, of course, De La Soul's huge *3 Feet High and Rising*.

But even in a year when hip-hop was so amazingly healthy—opening up, expanding, and diversifying in every direction—*Paul's Boutique* exploded into our lives like nothing else.

It was late July and I was at my friend Ivan's, slumped on his sofa. We spent whole afternoons drawing, bitching about sprayer rivals, talking about all the girls we'd never get, and listening to music. We'd both loved *Licensed to Ill*, so of course we had to get the new Beasties as soon as it came out. The slinky opening track—calling out "To All the Girls" like we wished we could—was cool, but then, with no warning, the needle gets the shakes as the bass of "Shake Your Rump" rips through

the speakers. We couldn't believe what we were hearing. We were immediately sold.

The beats on *Paul's Boutique* were so much more musical than any other hip-hop we'd heard; the production pioneered a dense usage of samples from a wildly eclectic range of sources—from The Beatles to the *Jaws* soundtrack, through a dizzying cut-up smorgasbord of funk, jazz, and Zeppelin. There was no effective law in place yet to prevent people from helping themselves to music from all over like that. It would be another couple of years until Biz Markie got sued by Gilbert O'Sullivan in a landmark case that'd change hip-hop production forever... but that's another story.

Topping off the Dust Brothers' killer production, the lyrics are similarly jam-packed with characters, stories, name-drops, and jokes, making the LP so rich in detail it feels like you notice something new every time you play it.

At first the album flopped. Critics didn't quite know what to make of it and fans were expecting another *License to Ill* party record—this was way

more rich and strange, in a way. The Beastie Boys reportedly even went as far as saying they wanted to make a record without a hit single.

Listening to its 20th anniversary reissue, with its position as an acknowledged classic safely secured, it's hard to believe that it was ever shunned as the runt of the litter. It was such a trailblazing LP—so ahead of its time that it still sounds totally fresh today.

We didn't know we were listening to a future classic; we just knew we had a new soundtrack to the rest of the summer, and proceeded to watch that needle shake, look at the great (nearly) 360-degree cover view of a cool Manhattan street, and dream of being there and being confident enough to shout out "Hey ladies!" and not get laughed at.

If these three skinny white boys could pull it off, there was hope... even for us.

**Xrabit and DMG's *Hello World* is out now on Big Dada.**  
[myspace.com/xrabit](http://myspace.com/xrabit)

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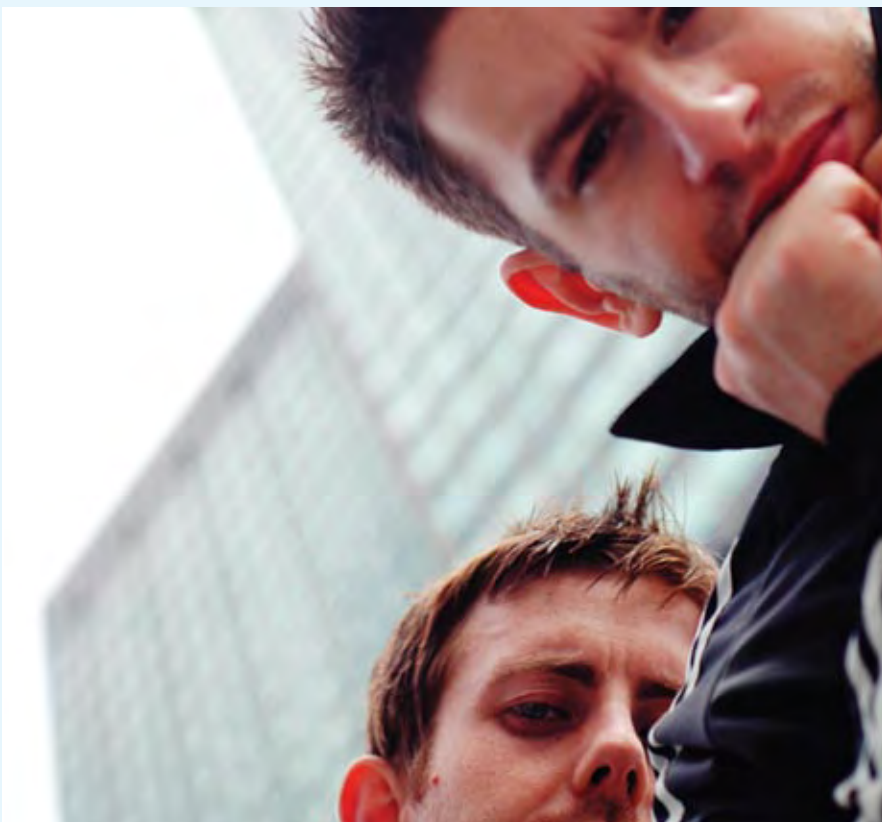
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# CHASE & STATUS

A DRUM & BASS DUO KEEPS THE ATTITUDE LIGHT  
AND THE BREAKS HEAVY.



**ON CHASE & STATUS' DEBUT ALBUM, LAST OCTOBER'S *MORE THAN ALOT*, THE BRITISH DRUM & BASS DUO MOVES EFFORTLESSLY BETWEEN 170BPM TEAR-OUTS, DUBSTEP, AND POP.** "Against All Odds," a collaboration with MC Kano, is all Ronson-esque horns and big uprocking breaks; "Eastern Jam" is a dubstep stormer so massive that Snoop Dogg recently asked to rhyme over it (creating "Snoop Dogg Millionaire"). Blissfully—and this is big—the record avoids the downtempo clunkers and boring "beat" segues that plague most D&B artist albums.

*More Than Alot* is more fun than serious, a trait Saul "Chase" Milton and Will "Status" Kennard seem to share. They've got no shortage of tour stories—a swan smashing into their windshield on the way home from a gig; getting thrown out of an L.A. rave, then having to beg their way back in—and they love *SNL*-affiliated joke band The Lonely Island (perhaps because they resemble Andy Samberg and Jorma Taccone). Kennard, 28, says he is addicted to Starbucks and obsessed with "golf, football, and boat shoes, although probably not in that order."

Though these pursuits sound tame, Chase & Status are musically unpredictable. They've collaborated with R&B vocalist Jenna G, rapper Plan B, and dancehall's Capleton, backing them with big-sounding breaks and flawless production that doesn't get too techy or sci-fi. *More Than Alot* contains many surprises, including the guitar intro of "Pieces" and "Running," which starts off as an '80s electro boy-band number only to turn into a heavy bass wobbler.

Though they're Top 10 in the U.K. charts and getting regular spins on BBC, success didn't happen overnight. Milton and Kennard met as

17-year-old jungle ravers in London. "We would talk endlessly about tunes and wanting to be DJs," recalls Kennard. In the early 2000s, the pair went away to university together in Manchester, where they "got to grips with the world of production." Early releases on Zinc's Bingo Beats and Fresh's Breakbeat Kaos label previewed the duo's hard, bouncy style, but things really started moving in 2007, when they linked up with Andy C's anthem-generating Ram Records. To this day, Chase & Status still have far fewer 12"s out than most drum & bass artists but they are hugely critical of their own work. "We'd rather have less tunes out there but all of a higher standard rather than flooding the market with a load of average music," explains Milton.

The duo says their junglist chops have helped them conquer numerous musical styles. "The technical skills needed to make drum & bass are second to none and the attention to detail and mixdowns are at such a high level that once you've got the hang of making it you can pretty much turn your hand to any other genre," explains Milton, and Kennard concurs. "Drum & bass has taught us a lot [about] how to fill out and balance frequencies to get that sonic energy you need with dance music."

Having completed one full-length, the pair are keen to get on with its follow-up. "For us, it's all about albums," says Milton. "It's them that sets you apart as an artist. You can't take people on a journey through a collection of singles."

• Chase & Status' *More Than Alot* (Ram) is out now. [myspace.com/chaseandstatus](http://myspace.com/chaseandstatus)

WORDS: VIVIAN HOST

FROM LEFT: WILL KENNARD AND SAUL MILTON



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"Living in Southern California definitely affects the design of our clothes," explains staffer Lauren Rodgers, who counts Pandora internet radio and the Cha Cha Lounge in Silverlake among her favorite things. We asked Rodgers and Liz Rice, who runs the company's Artist Network Program, to tell us more about the line's current women's looks. And make sure to check their online blog, with posts from the likes of Revok, Aaron Rose, and Cali Dewitt. Tyra

[rvca.com](http://rvca.com)



**Felony long-sleeve (\$40)**  
We wanted to do an essential layering piece for those cold winter mornings, something you can throw under your brushed heavy flannel or tee. This style is more fitted and has a scoop-neck detail to give this tomboy-ish piece a bit of femininity.

**Taryn pants (\$72)**  
We love to play with elements of masculinity and femininity in RVCA's women's line, and tie them together in an unexpected way. We took a men's striped trouser and made it our own with a slimmer fit down the leg while keeping the crisp, clean look. Wear it cuffed or all the way down, scrunched at your ankle.



**Vendetta jacket (\$115)**  
We wanted a blazer in our fall 2009 line to offer that one piece that completed your outfit for a night out. We initially thought to do it in classic suiting material, but then opted for black vegan leather (need to be animal-friendly!) to give it more edge. The silhouette is perfect: cropped with three-quarter sleeves you can roll up your arm, with a scooped back hemline.

**Chevy cords (\$69)**  
We wanted to have a basic 100% cotton non-stretch cord in the line and it seemed that putting it into one of our classic denim styles only made sense. This is one of RVCA's most popular denim styles because of its great fit and classic chevron back-pocket detail.

**Chinaski flannel (\$76)**  
For this collaboration with Kevin "Spanky" Long, we chose one of the lightest weight 100% cotton flannel fabrics that could be heavily brushed. The objective was to recreate the look and hand-feel of a flannel you've owned for years. It's got a slim-fit body with a prominent shirttail.



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# DAMIAN LAZARUS

A TECH HOUSE MASTERMIND FALLS DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE  
AND CRAFTS A MONSTROUSLY GOOD DEBUT ALBUM.



**DAMIAN**—just ear candy. But with *Smoke the Monster Out*, Lazarus' debut artist album, the DJ/producer has got much in common with a well-known confectioner: Willy Wonka.

Like Wonka, Lazarus, the founder of the freq'd tech-house label Crosstown Rebels, has forged a career on pure imagination, using quirky vinyl and exotic materials to appeal to a broad audience while simultaneously winking at those in the know. Both concern themselves with presentation *and* flavor, striving to formulate confections that stand the test of time. And both know that perfecting the Everlasting Gobstopper has its dark side.

"Willy was obviously a real bastard, a cruel genius," reflects British ex-pat Lazarus by phone from Los Angeles, his adopted home since 2008. "He opened the world up to the innocence of children, but they were also caught up in some twisted business.

"I'm a big fan of bizarre oddities," continues Lazarus as he winds his car home through the hills above Echo Park from the Griffith Observatory, where he has been filming for his label's RebelRave.tv. He's found many fascinating pockets within the urban sprawl,

and along the way discovered hidden niches inside himself as well. "With this album, I wanted to show what's been creeping out from within me. It started from an idea, and progressed to interesting, to sounding good, to being crafted, to being signed [to Get Physical], and now to live shows. So it *is* a monster."

Lazarus even has an on-stage monster that would make Mary Shelley proud: a road case of perversely patched analog synths, delays, effects units, and pedals, with a mic and other assorted tone generators waiting to be splayed and slathered. It's a Frankenstein—originally cobbled through the clip-based sequencer Ableton Live—but a playful beast with a personality that's a culmination of obsessive curiosity.

For the album title, Lazarus borrowed a line from another British classic: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Specifically, the title comes from after Alice has consumed the "Eat Me" cookie and has uncontrollably, uncomfortably grown to fill the cottage, inciting the Dodo to demand the structure be set afire.

Featuring nods to minimal, electro,

psychedelic pop, and Brian Eno's oblique suggestion to "Listen to the quiet voice," *Smoke the Monster Out* represents the smoldering metamorphosis of a DJ who transcended electroclash and retro-futurism's implosion. It also follows on from the skewed influences displayed in Lazarus' brilliantly self-indulgent Lazpod podcast. *Smoke the Monster Out* layers harmonic robo-funk, pneumatic seepage, miniaturized versions of Spiritualized's dissociative symphonies, and dewy lullabies, peppering this stew with somnolent paranoia and naiveté. With melodies and lyrics from Swedish twins Taxi Taxi, as well as Lazarus' own multi-processed voice, the album is full of post-party whimsy, restrained but weighty as it detunes into new territory.

"As you grow older, you can take more from a work, like discovering *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory's* underbelly," concludes Lazarus. "And I like to think I put that into my production, giving more for people to discover on further listening."

• Damian Lazarus' *Smoke the Monster Out* is out now on Get Physical. [damianlazarus.com](http://damianlazarus.com)

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# WE ARE SKWEE€€

Surveying the "conflict R&B" sound of Scandinavia.

**BUBBLING UP FROM THE HOT SPRINGS AND FJORDS OF SCANDINAVIA, A CRAZY SOUND CALLED SKWEE€€ IS FLYING OUT OF DRUM MACHINES AND SYNTHESIZERS.**

Fat, chunky bass blurts that seem like they're tumbling over themselves are mixing with brittle beats that could have been made by a group of manic eight-year-olds let loose in the Korg factory. Described as "synthetic funk" or "conflict R&B," this magical musical land of skweee lies somewhere between hip-hop, R&B, electro, dancehall, and 8-bit. And, as the mid-tempo genre pioneered by a bunch of Finns and Swedes takes off, its sound is now touching down in Norway, Spain, England, and the U.S.

"Scandinavia is traditionally known for dark, serious, and melancholic music," says skweee artist Mesak. "Think of polished Swedish techno or Finnish avant-garde folk. Skweee is something quite opposite: it's funky and danceable, but still a bit stiff." Fredrik Mjelle (a.k.a. Beem) adds: "To me [the music] is about playfulness and attitude. It's about making people want to move and have fun... If people are hearing hotel lounge [sounds] in my music, they should turn the volume up a bit and try to play some air synth to it!" That playfulness is characteristic of this scene, reflected in the names of many of its anthems (including "Rick James is Dead" and "Skweee Like a Pig").

Producer Daniel Savio coined the term "skweee" in 2007 when he was testing the limits of his Roland Alpha Juno-1 synth, trying to squeeze every last ounce of juice out of it while making his "Bubble Bump" 7-inch. That same year he turned heads with his *World's 1st Skweee Mix mixtape* (under the name Kool DJ Dust), which is still worth tracking down. But for the last three years the entire genre has rested solidly on two labels: Flogsta Danshall and Harmonia. Flogsta was started in Stockholm by Frans Carlqvist (a.k.a. Pavan); its inaugural release in 2005 was a 7-inch, a collection of his wonky bleeps and bleeps, called "Punt Kick/Crank Up." Four years later the label has released 11 seven-inches and two CD compilations called *The Museum of Sound*. Meanwhile, across the Baltic to the east, Helsinki's Harmonia label (run by Randy Barracuda and Mesak, who is half of Mr. Velcro Fastener) has followed the same format, with several single releases and two superb compilations, *Harmonia Presents: Scandinavian Skweee Vols. 1 and 2*. Virtually every artist in the scene—including Rigas Den Andre, Claws Costeau, Boyz of Caligula, Beem, and Eero Johannes—is represented by one of these two labels.

Events like Helsinki's I Can Skweee Clearly Now, Bergen's Basstronomisk Institutt, and Stockholm's



GETTIN' SKWEE€€ AT BERGEN'S BASSTRONOMISK INSTITUTT.

Skweee Marathon showcase live performances, and the unique sound and antic-filled concerts have started to elicit international attention, especially from the dubstep world. (Many artists consider the skweee soundclash showcase at Sonar 2008 to be the highlight of the scene so far.) Late 2008 saw Mike Paradinas' groundbreaking British indie label Planet Mu release Eero Johannes' self-titled debut, which sounds gloriously like Timbaland getting in a fight with Arthur Russell.

Big things are happening in 2009 for skweee artists, starting with the birth of Oslo's superb dōdpop label. So far, they've released two genre-pushing 7"s with tunes by Norwegian's Beatbully, Melkeveien, and Sprutbass.

March's big event was the release of Savio's *Dirty Bomb* LP on Flogsta, and he'll be touring the States this summer in support of the album, thanks to U.S. skweee enthusiasts DJ Staypuft and Kid Logic. Mesak and Randy Barracuda will be out in the States as well. With this kind of momentum, it may not be long before Barracuda is granted his ultimate wish: "To play Easter Mass at the Vatican!" *Matt Earp*

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# IT'S ONLY NATURAL

Flora and fauna inspire this month's selection of the street's sweetest accessories.



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**4. Leah Chun x Poketo Alien mug (\$14)**  
poketo.com

**5. Wild & Wolf Anemone flask (\$15.95)**  
bloomsburystore.com, wildandwolf.com

**6. 55DSL x Bloody Beetroots windbreaker (\$155)**  
55dsl.com

**7. Nobis Seymour hat (\$65)**  
nobis.ca

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quiksilver.com

**9. DC Shoes x Incase Strapped backpack (\$200)**  
dcshoes.com, goincase.com

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burton.com

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# PARTY ALL THE TIME

Girl Talk's totally radical guide to raging sensibly on tour.



**SET YOUR ALARM FOR 2 P.M.** This means you'll actually be ready to wake up at 4 p.m. A late start is a great way to ensure you'll have enough energy to rage properly. After waking up, make sure to get some food in your system. Even though it's already dinnertime, eat cereal anyway.

**SHOWERING IS COMPLETELY OPTIONAL ON TOUR.** I get extremely sweaty when I perform, and it's gross. But it also rules to not clean your body when you're in a band. It comes with the turf. (Think: more street cred if you stink while you play.) If you're going to go 100% that night, I'd suggest staying raw.

**THE FIRST THING YOU SHOULD DO WHEN YOU GET IN THE VENUE IS SCOPE OUT THE FACILITIES.** Find the food, restrooms, booze, and so on. It's going to be a busy night, and you don't want to waste time trying to figure out where your next drink is coming from.

**EAT AGAIN BEFORE THE FESTIVITIES START.** If you don't, you're going to be on a one-way trip to Puketown. When you're traveling, people at the venue always know the best spots to eat. Figure out a late-night spot for post-party food slamming and learn where it's at in relation to the club. *Write this down.*

**DON'T START DRINKING UNTIL THE DOORS OPEN.** There's always a bunch of people hanging around the venue, getting ready to party backstage, taking photographs, doing interviews, and trying to find the free drinks. It's easy to get in celebration mode way too early. Don't take the bait. It's going to be a long night—holding off on your start time is crucial.

**START OFF WITH YOUR SIGNATURE HANG-OUT-STYLE DRINK.** For me, it's beer. You want something to set your foundation for the night, nothing too wild.

**ORDER A PIZZA THAT WILL BE DELIVERED EXACTLY WHEN YOU WALK OFF STAGE.** This is a classy move. Everyone hanging backstage will love it. Grab a small bite to eat before going to the next stage of the evening.

**WORK YOUR WAY UP THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT.** Figure out what time bars close in that city and plan accordingly. I like to start getting into harder liquor with approximately two hours left in the drinking night.

**WHEN YOU ARE READY TO TRULY EXCEL, GET INTO SHOTS.** Ideally, it should be in the same family of alcohol as what you've been drinking all night. That's not a rule. If you want to go over the top, mix it up but be ready for potential sickness. Don't treat getting sick as a defeat—celebrate it.



**THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT, YOU AND YOUR CREW SHOULD BE FINDING OUT ABOUT AS MANY POTENTIAL AFTERTYPES AS POSSIBLE.** When it's time for the bars to close, have a quick meeting to discuss the potential benefits of each party. Important factors to take into consideration are how many different people told you about each party, (and said peoples' personalities), what was promised to go down at the afterparty, and how you're going to get there.

**BY THE TIME YOU MAKE IT TO SOMEONE'S HOUSE, BE READY TO GET INSANE WITH IT.** If you're not ready to go there, then you might as well be in bed.

**DO YOUR THING AT THE PARTY BUT DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF AFTER-HOURS FOOD.** Get the most grease-covered item possible. We've moved into the stage of trying to avoid a hangover. Drink absurd amounts of water.

**STRETCH YOUR BODY OUT BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR HEAD TO THE PILLOW.** When you jump in bed, put on your *Sandlot* DVD and jam out on some Gatorade Rain.

**GO DIRECTLY TO MCDONALD'S AND ORDER A LARGE FRENCH FRIES.** If you happen to be hungover in the morning, they will save you.

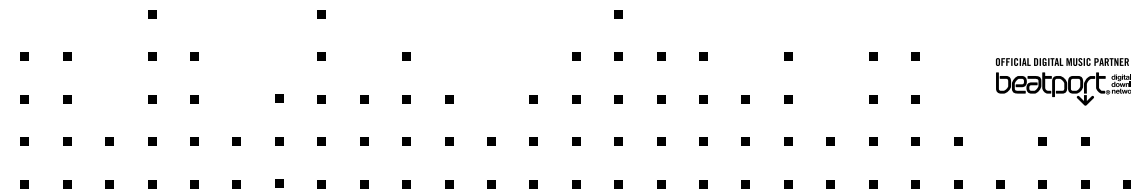
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**NI** NATIVE INSTRUMENTS

THE FUTURE OF SOUND 31



# SPIN CYCLE



HONEY OWENS

Rumor has it Portland's **Honey Owens** (alias **Valet**) is starting a new CD-R label dedicated to leftfield dance tracks—the name is Miracles Club.

Australian illustrator **Nathan Jurevicius** has an elaborate new videogame online; visit scarygirl.com to play.

The dark, animated video for "Shot in the Back of the Head," the first single from **Moby's** new album *Wait For Me*, was directed by **David Lynch**.

Paper Bag Records' avant-rockabilly artist **Slim Twig** appears in the new movie *Dog Pound*, from French underground director (and **Kourtrajmé** member) Kim Chapiron.

Ryan Stephens (a.k.a. **Electric Seaweed**) and Miami's **Freegums** have recently designed limited-edition t-shirts for the **Ghostly International** label.

This fall, **Reebok** will release shoes themed around the seven deadly sins and Miami Vice, plus the Omni Lite Pump Monster Pack, featuring pairs modeled after an evil Gremlin and the lovable Gizmo.

Belgian techno club Fuse celebrates its 15th birthday this month with a techno compilation featuring club classics from **Villalobos**, **Larry Heard**, and **Octave One**.

**Death in Vegas** frontman Richard Fearless has a new psych-rock band called **Black Acid**.

**Interpol** bassist Carlos Dengler produced, starred in, and scored the short film *My Friends Told Me About You*, a film (unsurprisingly) focused on celebrity as an affliction. The short is included on the *Wholphin #8* DVD compilation.

*Gig Posters Volume 1: Rock Show Art of the 21st Century* (Quirk) features over 700 examples of the best rock art, including 101 tear-out 11x14 posters ready for your wall. Check irreferrence.com for more.

The second annual ATP New York festival, co-curated by **Flaming Lips**, happens September 11-13 at Kutsher's Country Club in Monticello, NY; acts include **Anti-Pop Consortium**, **Caribou**, **Atlas Sound**, and **The Melvins**.

**Fred Money**, the 19-year-old little brother of Dipset rapper **JR Writer**, has signed to Babygrande; his debut is due June 9.

Icelandic act **GusGus** is back with a new album, *24-7 (Kompakt)*, on July 6.

**Carl Craig** will return to his post as Creative Director for Detroit's electronic music festival, Movement, for the 2010 installment.

This year's Oya Festival will occur August 11-15 in Oslo, Norway; highlights will include **Jaga Jazzist**, **Beirut**, **Satyricon**, and a live performance of **Philip Glass' Heroes** symphony (based on the 1977 **David Bowie** classic).

# TRAVEL TIPS!

"When your hair gets really greasy on tour, just spray it with a ton of cheap hairspray, wait for it to dry, and then brush it all out. It's like magic. Works way better than that hair powder stuff, which is just like putting dirt in your hair." - Cassie, *Vivian Girls*



## WHAT'S GOOD...

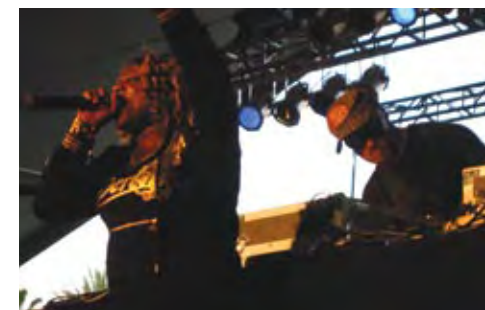
Expect new records in the coming months from: **A Place to Bury Strangers** (Mute), **Big Boi** (LaFace), **Bodycode** (Spectral Sound), **Joyo Velarde** (Quannum Projects), and **KRS-One & Buckshot** (Duck Down), whose *Survival Skills* features production from **Black Milk**, **Ill Mind**, **Coptic**, and **Havoc of Mobb Deep**.



A shot from the *Anthem* pool party.



Nick McCarthy from Franz Ferdinand treats the crowd to a Moog serenade.



Warrior Queen and The Bug gettin' moody.



John Doe and Exene Cervenka of legendary L.A. punk band X.



## CURRENT FAVES MIXTAPE BY: EROL ALKAN

### 1. A. VUOLO & E. GRANDE "DROPS IN THE WIND"

One of the most wonderful pieces of music I have heard in years.

### 2. MOUNT KIMBIE "MAYBES"

Fresh new talent, fresh beats—pretty much fresh everything.

### 3. CONAN MOCKASIN "IT'S CHOAD MY DEAR"

Untapped genius.

### 4. SOFT MACHINE "WE DID IT AGAIN"

A staple of all future Beyond the Wizard's Sleeve DJ sets.

### 5. MYSTERY JETS "ALICE SPRINGS (DEMO)"

The new MJ demos are a major step forward from "21." This is a standout track.

### 6. THE BEAT CLUB "SECURITY"

I'm completely and utterly in love with this.

### 7. BOYS NOIZE "TRANSMISCHEN"

From his new record.

### 8. ERRORSMITH "IN A SWEAT"

A personal favorite of face-melting techno.

### 9. SPACEMEN 3 "REVOLUTION"

I used to play this all the time at Trash—time for a revisit.

### 10. DEEE-LITE "WHAT IS LOVE?"

Still sounds so fresh.

Beyond the Wizard's Sleeve's *Reanimations Vol. 1* is out now on Third Mynd Recordings. [beyondthewizardssleeve.co.uk](http://beyondthewizardssleeve.co.uk)

# DESERT STORM

ARTISTS SHARE THEIR FAVORITE SHOTS FROM THE COACHELLA FESTIVAL



"I can't think of any other festival in the world where I'd have been able to take this picture."  
- Jack Brown, *White Lies*



"This photo was taken during our set in the Gobi tent. Kalaf and Conductor look like two very excited five-year-old kids on stage!"  
- Lil' Jon, *beatmaker*, *Buraka Som Sistema*



PHOTO CHRIS GALVIN

"One of the best things about playing at festivals is catching up with old friends you haven't seen in a while. I was a little bummed because I couldn't get close enough to lick Steve Aoki's face like I do in my dreams, so I just ate his hair instead."  
- Kim Moyes, *The Presets*





# SPARKIAL

FROM RUNNIN' WITH SHOTTAS TO INCITING GHETTO YOUTH TO RISE ABOVE,  
**MAVADO** TRIES TO OVERCOME HIS VIOLENT PAST.





●

## You can take Mavado out of the gully, but you can't take the gully out of Mavado.

For dancehall's reigning king, the impoverished environment in which he grew up remains his foundation and source of inspiration. Success "is nice," he says over the phone from Kingston, Jamaica, "but it doesn't change me as a person. It change as a lifestyle... Having money alone can't make you happy," he explains. "Even when me seh, 'Our dream come true,' I'm still there in the gully with my friends."

Coming up in the hardcore environment of Cuba, an infamous section of Kingston's Cassava Piece neighborhood—a slum within a ghetto within a city—the singer, born David Brooks, spent his early years focused on survival.

"Nuff youth grow up without a family," he says, his voice surprisingly soft-spoken. "Me growing up, me have just fe do what I do. Something daily a gwan."

Living in the ghetto, he says, "You have wrongful things and you have rightful things... We grow up knowing you haffi fight for what you own." The undeniable reality of Cuba's tenement yards and corrugated aluminum shacks surrounded him; instead of denying it, he accepted it as a birthright.

"Youth on the corner, we go through a whole heap a fight and a whole heap a tribulation, and we always come out on top," he says, matter-of-factly.

Now 27, Mavado navigates around the details of his sordid past cautiously. However, a hint at his back-story emerges in his lyrics, as he reminisces about shootouts with enemy crews and police. When Mavado mentions "heartless killers" who "a Christmas never talk 'bout dem a sorry," it's unclear whether he's referring to others' misdeeds or his own.

### SO BLESSED

Born on Christmas Day, 1981, and raised by his spiritual-minded grandmother, Brooks was expected to go to church on a regular basis as a child. Even after he began to trod the path of a young shotta, avoiding this obligation was not an option. "In Jamaica," he explains, "if your grandmother go a church, you go a church." He found sanctuary from the streets within the pews, and was captivated by the gospel choir—an influence that can be heard in his sound to this day.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the church was where he first developed his appreciation for music. "Me grandmother, she was the first person wha mek David Brooks really love music," he relates.

Music is Mavado's biggest obsession, he admits; once introduced to the deejay business by his mentor Bounty Killer, his competitive nature drove him to overcome





any and all obstacles in his path. Like the luxury watch from which his name is derived, he's kept steady and accurate time, becoming as predictable as Swiss movement once he started to impact Jamaica's dancehall scene.

"Each time Mavado do a hit song, it just influence me to do a next hit song," he says (referring to himself in the third person, which is typical of dancehall DJs). "Me just believe inna me music. It just always get to the next level."

#### THE LINE OF FIYAH

After a five-year climb to the top of the reggae industry—an ascension furthered by big tune after big tune, from 2006's "Wha Dem a Do" to 2007's "Touch the Road" and "Top Shotta Nah Miss" to 2008's "On the Rock" and "I'm So Special"—he's become the genre's brightest international star, and its most controversial.

A self-proclaimed "Gangsta 4 Life," Mavado's unvarnished tales of life, death, and struggle amidst the backdrop of Jamaica's outlaws, criminals, and top shottas have focused attention on a side of the island the tourist board would just as soon have you forget. As the *Jamaica Gleaner* wrote in 2008, "his often violently graphic lyrics [have been] deemed in various quarters as just about the closest thing to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*."

Mavado's hardcore persona isn't just an

act. Numerous run-ins with the law have only added to his outlaw appeal: Gun charges have prevented him from getting a visa to enter the United States until recently, and on one occasion, he was pushed through a glass window at a Jamaican police station. His father was murdered just before his 2007 debut album, *Gangsta 4 Life: The Symphony of David Brooks*, was released, and Mavado's name frequently comes up when allegations of dancehall artists inciting violence are raised. (In 2008, Red Stripe withdrew its sponsorship of the Reggae Sumfest and Sting festivals due to these concerns). His 40-deep entourage has frequently had friction with police and other dancehall crews alike, and his conflict with Vybz Kartel has been the subject of much gossip, rumors, and chatty-mouth talk.

#### TROPICAL STORM

Yet attempts to curtail Mavado's popularity and influence have proven as effective as stopping a tsunami with a sieve. It's not uncommon to hear four or five songs by the "Gully God" in a row in dancehall sessions from Brooklyn to Tokyo, and high-profile collaborations with G-Unit and Jay-Z (as well as Hot 97 airplay, an appearance on *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s in-game dancehall station, and a VP Records-Nike collaboration with Jamaican sprinter Asafa Powell) have introduced him to mainstream listeners outside

of dancehall's core audience.

Asked how he linked with Jay-Z for "On the Rock," Mavado says, "Real music, y'unnerstand? He hear the track and he just start saying something on it, because I'm saying 'On the Rock.'" (It's also worth noting that Jay-Z's label is called Roc-A-Fella.)

Comparisons have been made between Mavado and late American thug life icon Tupac Shakur; the parallels go beyond just hyperbole. Like Tupac, Mavado sounds like he's continually wrestling with inner demons, fighting a tortuous battle between good and evil in his own mind while living in a world in which survival trumps morality every time.

His pained, almost haunted, delivery—often augmented with minor-chord melodies—comes off as both unflinchingly brutal and undeniably authentic. "The place I am coming from [is] being a real youth from the gully," he explains. "The people can feel the struggle," he adds.

Mavado didn't invent gun talk in dancehall music—far from it—but he's redefined rude-boy lyrics with riddim-driven testimonials that are part confession, part boast, and part plea. Unrepentant to the point of defiance, Mavado has an uncanny ability to channel raw emotion and transcend the limitations of both dancehall artists and rappers with similar lyrical themes.

He chooses not to speak on his beef with Kartel (a former comrade in Bounty Killer's all-



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" YOU HAVE WRONGFUL THINGS AND YOU HAVE RIGHTFUL THINGS ...

WE GROW UP KNOWING YOU HAFFI FIGHT FOR WHAT YOU OWN."

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star crew, The Alliance), but he does address the topic of competition in general. To him, there's no distinction between the rivalries he's encountered "in music, in life, in people out deh." Such conflict is inevitable, he says stoically: "Each time Mavado fight...that is a part of it."

#### TOMORROWLAND

Mavado's second full-length album, *Mr. Brooks... A Better Tomorrow*, doesn't sugarcoat his criminal past nor dilute his unique phrasing, delivery, or sound. But it does frequently attain an inspirational tone (and, his label VP hopes, the same kind of crossover appeal as labelmates Sean Paul, Shaggy, and Elephant Man).

"A better tomorrow—it means that me just keep up the struggle and the fight," he says. "I've been through whole heap a things."

On *Gangsta 4 Life*, Mavado reflected on his everyday hustle, his slightly off-key, half-sung ad-libs adding texture to the lyrical pictures he painted over hot stock riddims. His sophomore effort finds him musing not only on his past activities, but also on the effects of Mavado's fame, fortune, and notoriety on David Brooks.

"Money don't change we/We change money," he sing-jays on "Money Changer." On "So Blessed," he emphasizes, "I will survive/Dem want

*me stressed.*" Urgent, Jah Cure-like crooning informs "Don't Worry"—a declaration of allegiance to the streets—while the "hey-hey-heys" of the percolating Rai Rai riddim underline razor-sharp rebukes directed at haters and rivals on "So Special." In Mavado's hands, what could have been a by-the-numbers track turns into a poignant, motivational discourse on the will not only to strive but to succeed:

*Dem seh dem want me head pon block*

*But me bun di fire til it spread pon dat*

*Dem better help poor people with dem bed pon block*

*If you see a dutty heart you a go dead from that*

*Now dem seh a dat me fi mark fi death*

*And each time we walk dem seh we walk fi death*

*Dem lock me down but me cyaan forget*

*Jehovah did ah guide me seh me nah regret*





"EVEN WHEN ME SEH, 'OUR DREAM COME TRUE,'

I'M STILL THERE IN THE GULLY WITH MY FRIENDS."





#### UPRISING

It's probably no mere coincidence that this interview—postponed for a day after VP's staff was initially unable to locate Mavado in Jamaica—eventually happened on Feb. 6, the birthday of another famous youth from the ghettos of Kingston, Bob Marley.

What Marley was to the roots reggae audience in the '70s, Mavado is fast becoming for today's more urbanized version of the genre. For his part, Mavado fully understands Marley's significance as the first global music superstar to come from the tiny Caribbean island. "We should always honor Bob Marley," he says. "He made a certain international link. Bob died 30 years ago, and look at [the reggae industry] today."

Having reached role-model status for ghetto youth all over the world as well as being a symbol of dancehall's contemporary appeal and pop-cultural viability, Mavado remains focused on his mission to "take the root from out of the gully."

In conversation, Mavado—whose recent hits include "Overcome" (a reworking of the Civil Rights anthem "We Shall Overcome") and an Obama tribute, "We Need Barack"—appears much more conscious than his detractors have made him out to be. However, he says, stopping the violence that continues to plague Jamaica isn't as simple as him voicing some positive tunes and declaring a ceasefire on his own.

"We can't bring change until we change ourselves," he says. "Even if Mavado seh he want peace," he explains, "the same people out a road, dem gwan with the same thing. We need 100 more Obamas and then we can have peace."

"Music don't determine nothing..." he says, pausing for emphasis. "People do."

[Mr. Brooks... A Better Tomorrow is out now on VP.](#)  
[myspace.com/realmavado](http://myspace.com/realmavado)

#### EVER BLAZIN'

THREE DJs ON THEIR FAVORITE MAVADO TUNES.

##### MATT SHADETEK



"My favorite new Mavado track right now is probably 'Inna Di Car Back.' The combination of Mavado and Stephen 'The Genius' McGregor, who is probably one of the most exciting producers out right now in any genre, is killer. I love Mavado's funeral-singing vibe generally, but this one being more of a gyal tune makes it a nice DJ tool as well."

##### DENNIS SHAW, SOUTH RAKKAS CREW



"Right now, 'So Blessed' is definitely my number one Mavado tune. There are so many in rotation but this one just stands out as something that's going to last. Seems like when Mavado and producer Stephen McGregor link up, they just take dancehall to a next level."

##### MAX GLAZER, FEDERATION SOUND



"My favorite Mavado song right now is 'I'm So Special.' It's a feel-good song, and I love playing it and singing along with it in my sets. It gets the crowd going."





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HIP-HOP'S VEGAN ALIEN SEX FIEND LABTEKWON LIFTS OFF.

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WORDS JESSE SERWER PHOTOS JOSH SISK





For those who've never found themselves watching Nelly's "Tip Drill" video at 3 a.m. on a Tuesday, I'll explain about *BET: Uncut*.

*BET: Uncut* was a controversial X-rated rap showcase that thrived in the early 2000s, in those last years before YouTube. Dominated by no-budget clips from no-name Southern rappers and "too hot for TV" edits of 50 Cent and Lil' Jon hits, it was an unlikely forum in which to encounter an abstract MC known for dropping references to his vegan diet and skateboarding into his jazzy, Afrocentric space rap. Yet, Labtekwon's endearingly skeezy 2003 video for "Unnhhh Hunch" was one of the more distinctive clips to appear on the series.

"I knew the only way to get on television was to have a girl shake her ass," Labtekwon says. "And I proved my point."

That the rapper behind some of the most intellectually challenging, information-heavy, and rhythmically complex MCing of the last decade might actually be best known for an *Uncut* video is no small irony. Yet, somehow it fits. Across the span of 16 years and some 25-plus albums—from the 10-volume *Labteknology* CD-R series, whose Sun Ra-inspired rap jazz established him as an oracle of African history of the late '90s, to last year's *410 Funk*, an LP with B-More club pioneers Jimmy Jones and DJ Boomah released under the name 410 Pharaohs—the rapper born Omar Akbar Young has always embraced the role of iconoclast.

"I've been a weirdo for a long-ass time," Lab says, taking stock of a career that dates back to the 1980s, when he got some of his first gigs at legendary Baltimore house-music venue (and Baltimore club music birthplace) Club Fantasy. "If you look at my catalog, it's hit or miss. I try to figure out what is it that no one's done, and do it well. I never did anything because I thought people would like me... Basically, I'm a counterpuncher. I like creating a dichotomy of paradoxical ideas."

#### SOUL MAN

Though he grew up in West Baltimore, Labtekwon (whose name is an acronym of "Lifeform Advanced Beyond Terrestrial Esoterics King Warrior of Nubia") lives in a stretch of downtown he describes as "a mélange of hood and gentrification." The new dynamics of the rapidly changing neighborhood rear their head when a security guard attempts to block him from cutting through the parking lot of his building, an old hotel that's been converted to condos predominantly occupied by white transplants. "I get that a lot," he says after coasting through the lot despite the guard's protest. "If people see you in a fitted hat and baggy jeans, it's like, 'What are you doing here?'" Sporting an Orioles cap with matching black, white, and orange Adidas Forums, Lab—who's in his late '30s—says he prefers baggy pants because there's room for basketball shorts underneath. ("I'm always ready to ball," he says.) As an O.G. "weirdo," he also feels the need to challenge a hipster-rap zeitgeist he believes values innovative fashion over actual innovation. "Every musician who's really progressive doesn't dress the

same way," he says, noting the conservative look of the '80s hardcore punk movement. "My obsession is counteracting trends. Whether that's ignorance in the community or wack motherfuckers in tight jeans, I'm always the next chapter."

In an effort to make its cultural institutions more accessible, admission to most museums in Baltimore is free; this makes the café at the Walters Art Museum near Lab's apartment a convenient location for our chat. Getting a handle on the status of Lab's new projects proves to be a chaotic undertaking. At the time of my visit to Baltimore, he's just about to release *Di Na Ko Degg: Soul Power*, a sort of extended version of his 2008 LP, *Di Na Ko Degg*, and says he'll drop two more new albums—another club-flavored LP called *Visions of Godfrey* with Scottie B and DJ Excel, and the as-yet undefined *Next*—before year's end. At the moment, though, he's focused on Ghettolectic, a new group project with producer Thur Deephrey (who previously collaborated with Lab in the side-projects Tao of Slick and CSD) and singers Nicholas Grant and Manny (a.k.a. U-el).

"It's mellow, smooth, chill music but the subject matter is kind of volatile," Lab says of Ghettolectic, whose upcoming *New Age-Ancient Soul* full-length he hopes will re-establish R&B as a viable outlet for protest. "Soul music's been all about love or this PC, everybody-hold-hands thing for so long. There should be a new paradigm to reflect these times. But singers haven't committed to the stuff that Donny Hathaway, Curtis Mayfield, and Marvin Gaye did. Nobody's taking it to the folk level like Bob Dylan, talking about the common man's situation through soul music. Rap is the vehicle for this protest stuff now, but I've always said hip-hop isn't for everybody."

#### LIVING ON VIDEO

Later that day, I find myself with Labtekwon and Ghettolectic singer Manny at Morgan State University in suburban northeast Baltimore. Lab has come here to deliver a guest lecture on hip-hop's roots in traditional African culture but, arriving early, he turns the school's parking lot into a makeshift video set for Ghettolectic's "Mad at You," a sobering track that argues that, while there might be a black man in the White House, this country's still got a race problem.

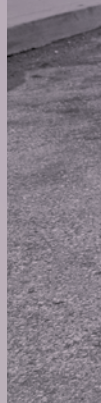
Over the last few years, shooting videos on the fly has become an almost everyday occurrence for Labtekwon. Despite their lack of production values, his trippy, ethereal clips for tracks like "The Beach" and "5th Elemental Deity" do a great job of capturing the otherworldly vibe of his albums; he's currently in the process of compiling them into a lifestyle DVD/mini-movie called *Visions of Tehuti*.

"Back in the day, the idea of doing an album was big—now, anybody can record a demo and call it an album," he says. "I'm trying to create a new standard with multimedia where, if you pay attention, you'll be like, 'Damn, so and so can't do that,' getting people to understand that's a part of my art. Just as much as I can write the rhymes and do the beats, I can shoot the video, write the treatment, edit it down."

#### THEY WILL HEAR IT

Labtekwon's far-ranging interests and ambitions haven't always served him, though. Last year, he released perhaps the two best albums of his career (*410 Pharaohs' 410 Funk* and *Di Na Ko Degg*), but neither made much of a splash. *410 Funk*, the first full-length album of verse-hook-verse rap songs over Baltimore club beats, was right on time with—yet much more lyrically impressive than—the wave of uptempo club rap that's become popular in recent years. Yet, for reasons that are not exactly clear, Strictly Rhythm Records, which released the album digitally through Kenny Dope's newly revived Ill Friction sub-label, never delivered physical copies or promoted the project.

Like most of his recordings, *Di Na Ko Degg*, the title of which means "they will hear it" in Wolof (a West African language), was released quietly through Lab's tiny Ankh Ba label. Perhaps his most intensely personal release, *Di Na Ko Degg* tracks like "Hurt to Heal" and "Foundation Style" contain the first-ever recorded appearances by his late father,



Harry "Doc Soul Stirrer" Young, a legendary Baltimore gangster and nightclub performer. "He didn't know how to interact in any environment other than the hood," Lab says of his father, who died early last year. "He just wanted to perform. A lot of people don't understand why I have a catalog that is so deep. I see it as the completion of a mission that my father never got to finish."

For someone who often takes great umbrage at being publicly slighted (he's been known to rebuke negative reviews of his music in online comments sections), Lab doesn't seem all that vexed by the fact that he made two of the year's best rap albums and they pretty much fell on deaf ears. He's more concerned with getting his next projects heard.

"Once I do something, it's passé. My focus is never on the last thing I did but on the next idea that I have to move towards. The biggest point should be your ability to evolve. If this is what it is right now, then what is the next logical thing? It's like when you do an algorithm, and you've got this part and then this part... What fits in between?"

*Di Na Ko Degg: Soul Power* is out now on Ankh Ba Records. Ghettolectic's *New Age-Ancient Soul* is out this summer. [myspace.com/labtekwon777](http://myspace.com/labtekwon777)



VISIT [XLR8R.COM/12EXTRAS](http://XLR8R.COM/12EXTRAS) FOR AN EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TOUR OF BALTIMORE WITH LABTEKWON.



LONDON LEGENDS **IDJUT BOYS** AND NORWAY'S **RUNE LINDBAEK**  
WANDER ACROSS MUSICAL GENRES AS **MEANDERTHALS**.

## TRIP THE LIGHT FANTASTIK

Urban Dictionary defines the term “meanderthal” as one who adopts “a weirdfunky sort of ‘non-linear’ and integral approach in day-to-day routine. To the outside observer, [their movements appear to happen in] a randomly chaotic, somewhat disjointed fashion, but the great productivity achieved thru this process by its skilled practitioners may often seem antithetical to the methodology of it.” In other words, whereas most folks would merely walk a straight line, the meanderthal dawdles, weaves, and disrupts everyday patterns, but still gets the job done.

Disjointed yet productive, chaotic but methodical: The Idjut Boys embody this paradox. For well over a decade now, sonic pranksters Dan Tyler and Conrad McDonnell have meandered across the dancefloor, weaving together inspired and kinked skeins of leftfield dance music at a swift rate. The London duo has pushed its sound to the outer limits of sanity, adding a psychedelic spin to '90s house music, lager-soaked dance jams, and the disco-not-disco revival. The 12-inches they've smeared their finger grease on appear under a variety of absurd, just-under-the-radar aliases: Phantom Slasher, Head Arse Fusion Band, Pastrami Man, Vitesse Nayway, Phantoms.

Add to that list of disguises Meanderthals, a studio project that sees the Boys holing up in the Oslo, Norway studio of space-disco purveyor Rune Lindbaek—and Lindbaek flying to London to do the same. The seven long tracks that comprise the trio's debut, *Desire Lines*, turn smooth-listening adjectives like “fusion,” “West Coast psychedelia,” and “nu-disco” on their noggins, suspending them in an extended keg stand 'til they're woozy, gassy, and a tad tipsy. The record hangs together even as it sounds amoebic, anthropomorphic, and genre-less. Its glimmers of dub, country, jazz lite and dark, psychedelic space rock, soundtrack noir, and funk are propelled by twinkling steel

drums, cavernous house meters, and dark electronic throbs. The sunbeams and jangly guitars of “Kunst or Ars” are almost textbook Balearic, though the song title hints at a tongue planted, if not in cheek, then somewhere else. Dribbles of hand percussion open up the title track as a gentle nylon-string-plucked melody wafts past, with *Bitches Brew*-style keyboards and a wah-wah guitar solo burning like a dormant volcano over canyon-deep dub. Were it not for the massive bass drones, you could almost mistake the sun-baked steel guitar on “Collective Fetish” for Ry Cooder kicking back in Jimmy Buffet's hammock. By the time you've reached the last track, the piano-laced “Bugges Room,” you're watching the sunrise, and desperately in need of another coconut drink.

### GETTING BENT

“We met in Cambridge through mutual friends, going to the same parties in peoples' houses,” the duo says via an email that makes it impossible to parse the individual voice of either Tyler or McDonnell. “Weekends involved the going-out ritual: filling the flat with people and listening to music whilst blitzkreiged, just going out dancing to varied soundtracks in various states. We used to go to a lot of the clubs and one-off things occurring at that time, [and] enjoyed the ambience of acid house as a relaxing pastime.”

Reminiscing about legendary sets by Tonka Sound System's DJ Harvey, François K., and Larry Levan—whom they saw at Harvey's Moist party at the Gardening Club in 1991—led the two to a major realization: “We dug out some of the music mixed by the likes of François and the other guys [from] that era and realized that... well, bent is better than straight-up.”

The pair set up its own U-Star label in 1995, casting a mischievous gauntlet into the U.K.'s stuffy house scene with







## BALEARIC BREAKDOWN

A GUIDE TO THE GENRE'S NEXT WAVE

The term Balearic originated to describe the laidback sound that emanated from the decks of Argentinean DJ Alfredo, a resident at the Amnesia nightclub on the island of Ibiza in the 1980s. Balearic's blend of early house, Euro-pop, and prog rock bands like Pink Floyd caught the ears of U.K. DJs like Paul Oakenfold and Pete Tong, who brought the style back to Blighty. These days, Balearic (also known as "Balearic beat" and "Balearic house") folds in SoCal soft rock, jazz fusion, psychedelia, downtempo, and anything else similarly breezy, spacey, and languidly body-moving, but it remains a genre-less genre, drawing from artists as diverse as The Art of Noise and Carly Simon, Manuel Göttsching and Fleetwood Mac. While currently being championed by folks from the fertile crescent of Scandinavia and Italian beards, Venice Beach burnouts and the long-hairs of the Bay Area, here are a few of Meanderthals' kindred spirits—acts best carrying the Balearic torch into the new century.

Andy Beta

### PETER VISTI



This Danish DJ/producer has tracks titled "Balearic Love" and "Late Night Balearic Monster," yet undercuts all preconceived notions of such sounds to great effect. Check out his *Balearic Monday* mix for Cool in the Pool, where he pulls together Woolfy, Maze, Willie Colon, and... Kenny Loggins?!

### A MOUNTAIN OF ONE



The U.K. duo of Mo Morris and Zeben Jameson touch upon Talk Talk, Kate Bush, and The Verve. Their debut album, due in September, is reportedly being mixed by the same folks who worked with Coldplay and Spiritualized, which may hint at lush, smooth sounds to come.

### STUDIO



Swedes Rasmus Hagg and Dan Lissvik half the difference between The Cure and Lindström. Their full-length debut, *West Coast*, and last year's album of remixes (for folks as disparate as Kylie Minogue, Fontän, and The Shout Out Louds) stretch slow-rolling rhythms to their limits, and there's seemingly not a flamenco guitar line that they don't like.

### MUDD



Often releasing tracks in conjunction with fellow producers Smith, Pollard, or Ahmed on the Claremont 56 label (see their ongoing *Originals* comps for the rarest of Balearic joints), U.K. producer Paul Mudd toes the line between the mischievous psychedelia of The Idjut Boys and once-reviled soft rock sounds.

their first 12-inch, "Jazz Fook." Already their absurd sense of humor was evident, and they even went so far as to give a 1999 record made with producer Quakerman the title *Life, The Shoing You Deserve*. "We just like to precede being laughed at by laughing at ourselves first," they write. "Seriousness comes too close to head-arse fusion."

### CASTING THE RUNES

The Idjut sensibility didn't just set off alarms in Blighty; their music quickly resounded almost all the way to the Arctic Circle. "I bought 'Jazz Fook' and it blew my head away," Rune Lindbaek tells me from Berlin, his excitement still audible a decade later. "I went, 'Wow! My God!' They used to be in Oslo all the time, at a place called Skansen—an old toilet of a venue voted the world's third best club by *The Face*, after Body & Soul and Basement Jaxx—a legendary place. The Idjuts were big Oslo heroes, long before the rest of the world discovered them."

Around 2001, the Idjuts floated the idea of working together with Lindbaek on a studio project. "He was over in our studio so we asked him to speak in Norske on 'Laisn,' to lend it that real soul slow-jam, drop-your-pants moment," the duo recalls of its first collaborative track, a tune that inexplicably injected a Muddy Waters/Johnny Winter snippet into woozy and spacious deep house. Of course, it took years for the trio to follow up. "Just them asking [to work with me] was a massive compliment," Lindbaek states. "I mean, they're such big heroes of mine, as well as good close friends, but we're not very organized people."

Seven years would pass before the three finally slotted time to work together, only to have their plans suddenly derailed by a disastrous bike accident. "I was in Vilnius, Lithuania where my girlfriend was working on a Norwegian film, and four or five days before we were going to meet up and start the album, I got a call that Conrad was bicycling and had been hit by a truck," recalls Lindbaek. McDonnell spent the next seven months convalescing, undergoing surgery on his hips and shoulder. The Idjuts sum it up cavalierly ("He was knocked off his bike. It hurt a lot. He's better now."), but Lindbaek says it was fairly serious. "He was very badly hurt. At first we only hoped he would survive but... he has a very strong build. He even did work a bit as a bouncer back in the days in Sunderland—a rough place he comes from—and that's what saved him. Luckily, Conrad is completely back and even jogging again. So, [*Desire Lines*] was a recording on life and death."

Slowly, work on Meanderthals re-convened. "I'm a melody man, I have to have melodies," Lindbaek explains about what each party brought to the sessions. "What they put in their music—the delay, the really cool sound—[it's] truly three-dimensional... They're masters at it, with their sexy synths and old compressors."

"[The Idjuts] are two of the most friendly and kind persons on the planet," Lindbaek continues. "They have morphed into the super-organism of music geniuses [that contains] the legacies of Lee 'Scratch' Perry and François Kevorkian and the souls of the best records in the world all rolled into one."

### MEANDERING TOWARDS GOMORRAH

The Idjuts are similarly stoked on having worked with Lindbaek. "Rune opened the door to some great musicians in Oslo," the Boys recollect. "The process was most definitely random. We even worked with Rune's studio neighbors, Lenny and Jo, for percussion, bass, and guitar, and Per Martinsen and his mate Anders on the Steinway. We just tried to remember to press the big red record button when something good was occurring." They also hint at a more club-friendly version of the album to come, provided it's "undressed suitably and interfered with in the right places."

It's easy to hear the influence of the Idjuts—that dosing of disco-inflected rhythms with toxic levels of delay and reverb—echoed in the work of the present crop of Scandinavian disco all-stars (Hans-Peter Lindström, Prins Thomas, Todd Terje); in a way, it feels like the Meanderthals project completes the circle. Of course, the Idjuts shrug off the notion that they helped foster Norway's space-disco scene: "We obviously taught them nothing except the drink-till-you-barf fitness regime. They are Vikings, so it's a sport they took to with ease."

With *Desire Lines*, both the Idjut Boys and Lindbaek could be poised for fame outside blurry DJ sets and dark clubs, but they're comfortable enough with being outsiders. "Obviously we want to be really hip and make piles of money and indulge in a mirage of warped fantasies whilst having rightfully claimed to have invented hip-hop," they quip. "But that doesn't fit with the no-strategy walk."

Meanderthals' *Desire Lines* is out now on Smalltown Supersound. [myspace.com/weanderthals](http://myspace.com/weanderthals)



# PARTY OUT OF BOUNDS

GLOBAL PARTY PROFESSIONALS TELL YOU THE BEST PLACES TO GET BUCK WILD.

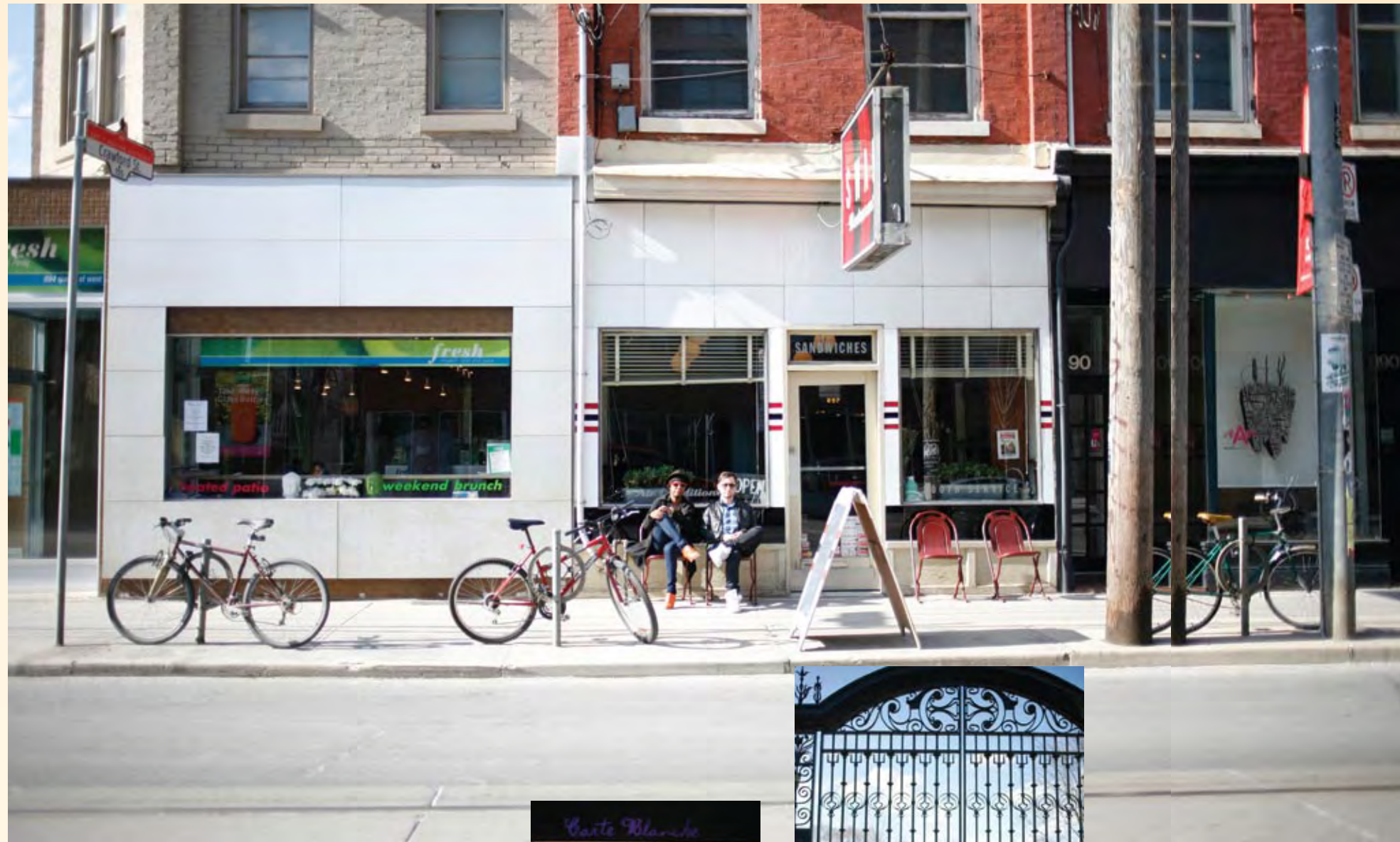
It's common knowledge that the best way to experience a city is to have a local take you around. And since our summer party schedule sees us touching down in some pretty exotic locations, we decided to ring up a few fearless natives to see where they hang out. In Helsinki, Finland, we tapped the renaissance men of the **TOP BILLIN** crew—DJ/producers, label owners, promoters, bloggers, and all around wild and crazy guys—to take us to rockabilly barbershops and afterhours bars. Isis and Grahm.Zilla of tropical club-rap phenoms **THUNDERHEIST** show us the best shops and oxtail-eatin' on Toronto's Queen Street West before we head south to heat up the parks and food stalls of Buenos Aires with *cumbia nueva* crew **ZIZEK**. And just when you think you've seen all NYC has to offer, DJ and dairy lover **DEREK PLASLAIKO** gives you a tour of the city's secret techno hotspots, with a side of mozzarella.



# THUNDERHEIST

Toronto, Canada

GRAHAM AND ISIS, BIG DADA'S TOTALLY TROPICAL DUO, TAKE US ON A CAFFEINE-FUELED TOUR OF TORONTO'S QUEEN STREET WEST.

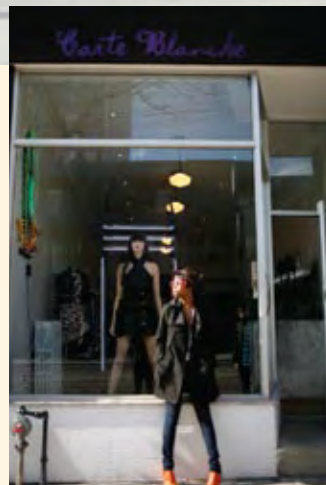


## SWAN RESTAURANT

892 Queen St. West  
Graham: This place serves a mean coffee and also has some super-rad food. Only problem is that it only holds about 20 people, so it's really hard to get a seat.

## CARTE BLANCHE

758 Queen St. West  
Isis: On the pricey side, but \$300 later, you walk out looking good.



## TRINITY BELLWOODS PARK

1053 Dundas St. West  
Isis: The perfect place for chilling in the summer—just watch out for the dog poop and crazy people.

## THE DRAKE HOTEL

1150 Queen St. West  
Graham: I love this place for two reasons: it's my morning cappuccino spot, and I have a DJ residency in the basement called Nonstop, which is usually a blast and we bring in all kinds of good DJs from abroad.



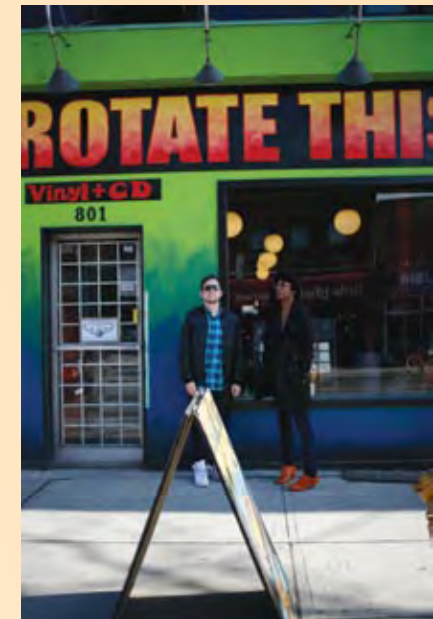
## VINTAGE 69

1100 Queen St. West  
Isis: The best place to get vintage stuff in Toronto. Awesome staff, and a must-see for vintage connoisseurs.



## GANDHI

554 Queen St. West  
Graham: Love the roti. Hate the post-roti burn. Definitely do not order the spicy roti!



## ROTATE THIS

801 Queen St. West  
Graham: One of the best record shops in the city for new and old vinyl. I try to make a point to go once a week and buy something new. I have a renewed love for vinyl since I got a portable Vestax turntable and put it in the kitchen. Cooking is an art, and having a soundtrack for each meal is where it's at!

[thunderheist.com](http://thunderheist.com)



# ZIZEK URBAN BEATS CLUB

Buenos Aires, Argentina

ARGENTINIAN FIRESTARTER VILLA DIAMANTE SHOWS YOU THE CUMBIA BASS CREW'S FAVORITE PLACES TO CHILL, EAT, AND DANCE IN BUENOS AIRES.



## EL CHAPULÍN

*Av. Intendente Noel, Costanera Sur*  
A few years back, Sonido Martines decided to celebrate his birthday at this cart by the coast, so he brought his turntables, his records, and started playing *cumbia*. With Landero and Destellos songs playing, Zurita (pictured far right), El G, and DJ Campeón all showed up. Only Oro11 was missing—he was late because he ran into one of the guys from TV on the Radio on the street in San Telmo and invited him to the party to eat a *choripan*.



## JARDÍN BOTÁNICO (BOTANICAL GARDEN)

*Santa Fe 3951, Plaza Italia*  
Landscape Don Carlos Thy created the Buenos Aires Botanical Garden in 1892. Home to a great variety of species, it also happens to offer one of the most beautiful strolls in the city, right in the middle of the urban landscape. A few months ago, the garden was closed when some of its employees were suspected of accepting money in exchange for permitting the deposit of human remains on the grounds. Some high-society neighbors wanted to keep their family members close by—money talks in Buenos Aires.



## LA AROMÁTICA

*Bulnes 873, Almagro*  
People are always talking to me about this delicious little Colombian spot in the Almagro neighborhood. King Coya (pictured far right) remixing Petrona Martinez is the best analogy I can think of for La Aromática, a place where they play *gaitas* and other ancestral American music while putting delicious food on your plate.



## MITTE & PURR

*Av. Santa Fe 2729, local 30 y local 32*  
When you combine an art gallery with a bookstore and put it in the highest part of an old gallery on Avenida Santa Fe, you're going to get some interesting results. This place also hosts a mini-rave called Rom Rom on various Saturdays during the summer: hot (really hot) afternoons, dance, art, and tropical fruit smoothies. Here, gallery owner Neeco Demo stands in front of a drawing by Elias Santis.

## METROPOLIS

*Av. Santa Fe al 4300, Plaza Italia*  
"This city is a ghost city/All the clubs have closed already/ This city is like a ghost town/There are no places to perform," goes the chorus of Fantasma's "Ghost Town," a *cumbia* version of The Specials' classic. It's a reflection of what's happening to the Buenos Aires underground, as it keeps getting harder to open new spaces, whether it be for *cumbia*, rock, or electronic music. Metropolis, one of Buenos Aires' *cumbia* meccas, closed several years ago.



## LA FABRICA DEL TACO

*Gorriti 5062, Palermo*  
Last year I was with fellow Zizek DJs Chancha Vía Circuito, Fauna, and El G in Mexico. After some initial problems adapting to the food, I dove in, tried everything, and my perception of those flavors was changed forever. Later, when we returned to Buenos Aires, I tried a bunch of Mexican restaurants and always left feeling cheated. Our label coordinator, Anna (pictured here), told me about La Fabrica del Taco, and there I found the flavors that I had been searching for.



## ZIZEK CLUB

*Every Thursday at Voodoo Motel, Dorrego 1735, Palermo*  
The club night that I have been doing for more than two years with DJ Nim and El G is the dance laboratory we always dreamed about, where people go to dance and ZZK Records' producers experiment with their new beats. Our slogan has always been "For the love of dance." Pictured above is the Zizek Crew (from left to right): Negro Gran Faso, VJ Centro, Pablo de Fantasma, Anna Browne, El Remolón, DJ Nim & Luz, Daleduro, Villa Diamante, VJ Sol Del Rio, Tremor, and Lucas Luisao. [zzkclub.com](http://zzkclub.com)



# TOP BILLIN Helsinki, Finland

B-MORE-AND-BASS-LOVING FINNS FISKARS AND SIR NENIS SHOW US THE FINER POINTS OF RAISING HELL IN HELSINKI.

## THE BARBER SHOP

*19 Fredrikinkatu*

Our mate, Rody the Briton, is as nice as one gets. Pop in for a quick haircut and stay for an hour chatting about The Smiths and shit. Problems with your old lady? Wanna talk socio-economics or Helsinki infrastructure? Hell, Rory will drop a few gems on any subject. Every DJ in town gets their hair cut here. No dyes or faux-hawks.



## THE STONEHENGE

*Punavuori district*

For those wee hours in the summertime after the clubs have closed their doors, there is the 'Henge, where the creatures of the night from the Punavuori district gather in a drunk and disorderly fashion. Vodka-fueled debates range from A-Ha to Z-Ro to gibberish when the sun rises.



## LIFESAVER

*Laiurinkatu 41*

This record shop in Helsinki. Co-owned by Top Billin member and record aficionado extraordinaire DJ Anonymous. If you dig crates, you will dig Lifesaver.



## REDRUM

*Vuorikatu 2*

Home of the Top Billin club night. Three stories below the street level lies the red-light-lit basement; it's like the carbonite chamber of Cloud City, but with screaming, drunken hipster chicks and a Funktion One soundsystem. Their sister club, Kuudes Linja, is where we do all the hip-hop nights, so check that too.



## THE VIKING LINE

*Mastokatu 1*

Helsinki, the black pearl of the Baltic Sea, has active sea routes to neighboring countries such as Sweden and Austria. Therefore, we have a lot of cruise ships, or "fuck boats" as they're commonly known. One of our popular leisure activities is to hop on these floating hotels and sail into the sunset. Also a favorite for Italian tourists on vacation.



## SINEBRYCHOFF PARK

*Bulevardi 40*

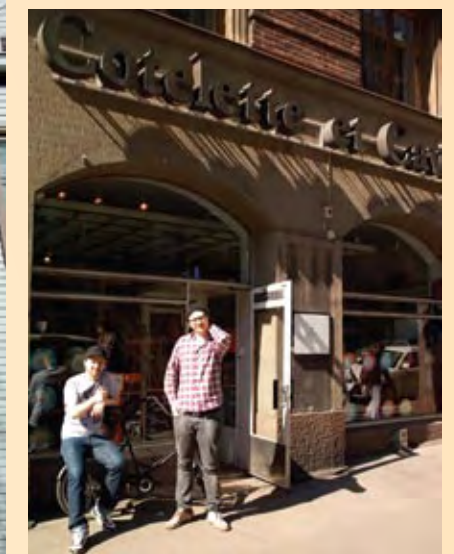
Our outdoor office in the Punavuori district. The lack of Trustafarians, crusties, and speed freaks makes it an ideal spot to concentrate on the finer things in life, such as beer and lightly clad women. Of course, a fight with some douchebags may break out now and then, but hey, you can make war or make babies.



## MANNERHEIM MUSEUM

*Kallioliinantie 14*

The estate of our beloved leader, the only true king of Finland, war marshal Mannerheim. A warrior, a poet, and a homosexual. This is where we come for inspiration and to salute the gentleman who saved us from the godless heathens that were the Reds 100 years ago. Maybe we'll start the Mannerheim pride parade.



## FOUR SEASONS SALADS & DELICATESSES

*Kapteeninkatu 24*

The deli choice of Top Billin. Just a block away from our studio, it's run by these French dudes who came to Helsinki to chase blondes (like all Frenchies). They serve the freshest salads and the tastiest baguettes. As we are picky, health-conscious metrosexuals, we tend to eat lightly. Gotta keep those abs toned, right? Lies. The portions are huge.

[topbillinmusic.com](http://topbillinmusic.com)



# DEREK PLASLAIKO

New York City, USA

PHOTOS VIVIAN HOST

THE DETROIT EXPAT AND GHOSTLY DJ LOVES LATE-NIGHT TECHNO PARTIES AND CHEESE—HERE'S WHERE TO GET THE BEST OF BOTH IN THE BIG APPLE.



## RUSSO'S

363 7th Ave., Brooklyn  
This place has the best fresh mozzarella, but you have to go all the way to Brooklyn's Park Slope neighborhood to get it. It's worth the trip! The mozzarella-and-prosciutto sandwich and the roasted artichokes are insane, plus they've got all kinds of cheeses and olives. You could easily drop \$70 here without blinking an eye.

## PUBLIC ASSEMBLY

70 N. 6th St., Brooklyn  
This is where we've done our club night, The Bunker, for almost two years now, on the first Friday of the month. It's just a messy, dirty techno party in Williamsburg that always ruins the rest of my weekend. As far as DJ guests, we mainly just go for artists that have never been to New York before. Come here for something different.



## BAR13

35 E. 13th St., Manhattan  
Right near NYU, this bar is home to a variety of different (mostly techno) promoters, including Blkmarket Membership, Less, Sonem, and Biatch Corp. Any day from Wednesday to Sunday you can find something going on here, which is rare in NYC. It's become a home of sorts, and they've got a really great roof deck where they throw a Sunday BBQ. I like to show up there and grill steaks.



## HALCYON

57 Pearl St., Brooklyn  
This great all-around record shop in Dumbo sells mostly electronic music, but also rock, hip-hop, and old funk, plus really cool clothing and books. Plus, I get to hang out with one of the owners, Shawn Schwartz, who is one of the coolest guys I've ever met.

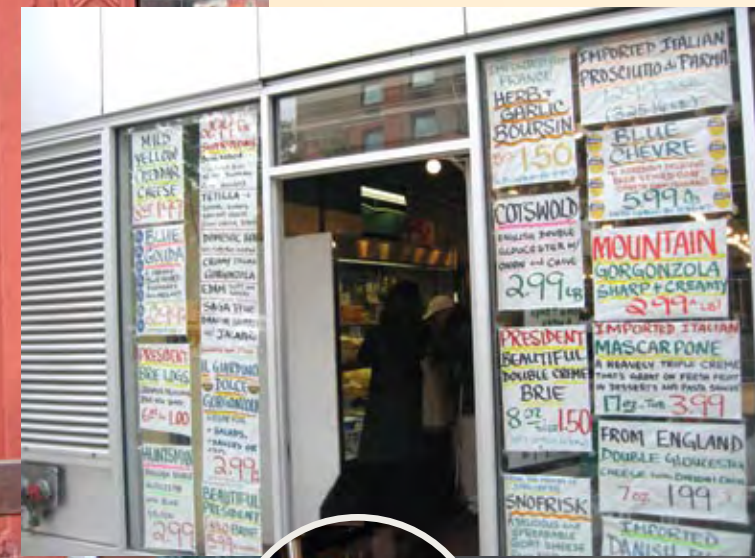


## CROXLEY ALES

28 Avenue B, Manhattan  
On Mondays and Wednesdays, this sports bar sells 10-cent Buffalo wings that you have to buy in groups of 20. They're definitely good for sweating out all the crap you've done to your body over the weekend. We've had competitions to see how many we can eat. I've gone about 28. Adam Beyer ate the most—about 34 without even trying... and he ate a salad.

## EAST VILLAGE CHEESE SHOP

40 3rd Ave., Manhattan  
Oh, dude, it's the bomb. It's run by Tibetan monks. Somehow they get their hands on really expensive cheeses and sell them for really cheap. One of my favorites, a bleu cheese called St. Augere, normally sells for \$28.99 a pound and here I got it for \$3.99 a pound!



## 12TURNS13

secret location, Brooklyn  
This location on Brooklyn's Classon Avenue is used for the House and Home parties, where they mainly play the deeper side of house. DJ Spinoza (who throws The Bunker) does the party with Anthony Parasol and Steve, the guy who owns this loft. The DJ booth is set up in the kitchen and there's a beautiful roof deck with a really good view of Manhattan.  
[plasiaiko.net](http://plasiaiko.net)

CHECK [XLR8R.COM/127EXTRAS](http://XLR8R.COM/127EXTRAS) FOR EXTENDED VERSIONS OF ALL OF THESE TOURS.



# THE LIGHT

PHOTOS MARLEY KATE STYLIST LIZ BACA/THE GOODS! HAIR & MAKEUP JET ALEXANDRA  
MODELS TAYLOR (M2C MODEL MGMT.) AND LAUREN (WILHELMINA)  
ITEMS FROM CHEAP MONDAY, JEFFREY CAMPBELL, JOY RICH, MELODY ESHANI, AND SUPER  
AVAILABLE AT KARMALoop.COM.



TAYLOR WEARS SUNGLASSES BY SUPER. TANK TOP BY SDSL.





LAUREN WEARS VINTAGE KENZO BLAZER FROM THE GOODSL. TOP BY OPENING CEREMONY FOR UNIQLO. BODYSUIT BY CHEAP MONDAY. SKIRT FROM STUSSY. GIMLS, NECKLACE BY CUBANLIE LINKS, AND WATCH RING BY MELODY ESHANI



TAYLOR (LEFT) WEARS TOP BY HELLZ BELLZ, SHORTS BY STUSSY, VINTAGE BLAZER AND TIE FROM SCREAMING MIMI'S. SUNGLASSES BY JOY RICH. LAUREN WEARS TOP BY HELLZ BELLZ, SHORTS BY STUSSY DELUXE, BRACELET BY DISAYA, SHOES BY JEFFREY CAMPBELL





TAYLOR WEARS SUNGLASSES BY A-MORIB, BLAZER BY OPENING CEREMONY  
FOR UNIQLO, BIKINI BY SPSL, SHORTS BY SHADES OF GREIGE, STYLIST'S OWN BELTS





TAYLOR (THIS PAGE) WEARS SUNGLASSES BY SUPER,  
VINTAGE TIE FROM SCREAMING MIMI'S, TANK TOP BY SSDSL,  
VINTAGE VEST FROM THE GOODSL, JUMPER (WORN AS PANTS)  
BY WESC, SHOES BY JEFFREY CAMPBELL

LAUREN (FACING PAGE) WEARS BIKINI BY SIUSSY GIRLS, NECKLACE BY  
JOY RICH, BLAZER BY OPENING CEREMONY FOR UNIOLO, SKIRT BY WESC,  
VINTAGE LOAFERS FROM THE GOODSL, STYLIST'S OWN BELTS

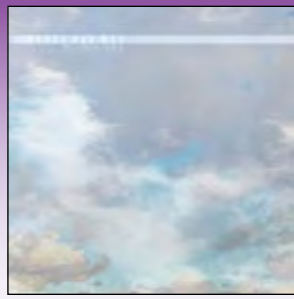
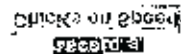






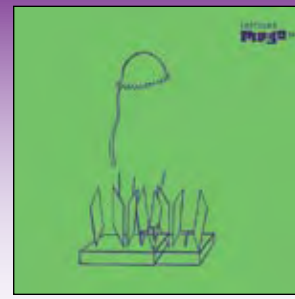
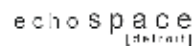
**CHICKS ON SPEED**  
*Cutting The Edge 2CD/2LP*

The Chicks' new double album is the result of two years of productive creativity, and features high-heeled shoe guitars, '60s bubblegum-pop and collaborations with guests Patrick Pulsinger, Fred Schneider, Gerhardt Potuznik, and more.



**BROCK VAN WEY**  
*White Clouds Drift On And On 2CD*

Brock Van Wey's (aka *bvdub*) release for echospace is ambient-textured deep techno of the highest caliber that borders the surface of works by Steve Roach, Eno or Basic Channel. Includes a bonus album of interpretive versions by *Intrusion*.



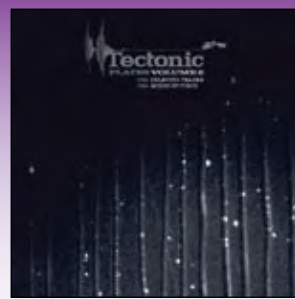
**JIM O'ROURKE**  
*I'm Happy, And I'm Singing, And A 1, 2, 3, 4 2CD*

A milestone of electronic music, the ultimate laptop record from Jim O'Rourke (*Gastr Del Sol*, *Sonic Youth*) is reissued with a bonus disc of unreleased material. "...a startlingly personal, affecting album...O'Rourke's most direct statement to date." —Pitchfork (9.0)



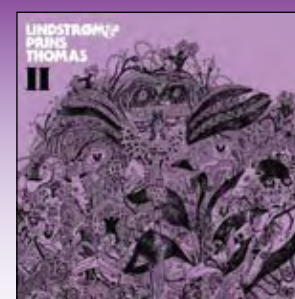
**ADA**  
*Adaptations - Mixtape #1 CD*

Ada's debut full-length on Kompakt is a collection of memorable moments in her illustrious career, including remixes and previously-unreleased tracks. Featuring appearances by Tracey Thorn (*Everything But The Girl*), Booka Shade, Raz Ohara, Dee Pulse and Michael Mayer.



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
*Tectonic Plates Volume 2 2CD*

The second volume in the *Tectonic Plates* compilation series by the Bristol-based Tectonic label. Following the spectacular run of 12"s released over the past year, this is a crowning 2CD collection – the first disc comprises the entire imminent and as-yet unreleased four-part 12" vinyl *Plates* series in all its glory, the second CD is an exclusive mix from Rob Ellis aka Pinch. Massive.



**LINDSTRØM & PRINS THOMAS**  
*II CD/4LP*

The space-disco kings are back with their highly-anticipated second full-length release. "*Lindstrøm and Prins Thomas provide us with lush basslines, sublime melodies and rolling rhythms that cascade like snowflakes being hit by harsh early-morning sunlight.*" —Boomkat



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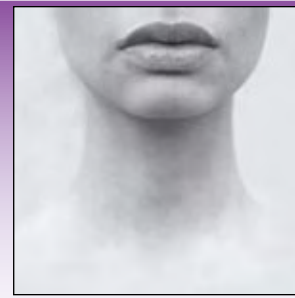
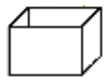
**BODYCODE**  
*Immune CD*

Alan Abrahams (aka *Portable*) is a restless spirit. Teutonic house music's taut, jacking rhythms form the core of his new full-length as *Bodycode*, chugging along at a brisk clip while cramming in enough rhythmic detail to make one's head spin.



**LIONDIALER**  
*Liondialer LIVE! CD*

Liondialer is the debut full-length collaborative project from Manchester, UK/Berlin duo Greg Haines and Danny Saul. Using cello and guitar as a starting point, Liondialer compose and process their sound to devastating effect – laptop pub-ambient, anyone? For fans of: Talk Talk, Stars Of The Lid, Tony Conrad, and Loren Connors.



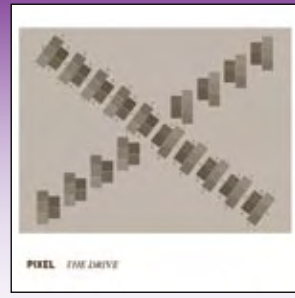
**MOKIRA**  
*Persona CD/LP*

This is the second full-length release by Sweden's Andreas Tilliander as Mokira for the Type label. Constructed entirely in the analog realm, it radiates the warming hiss of tape, the decomposing buzz of a monosynth, and the nostalgic twitch of the Roland TB303. A stunning collection of modern electronic music.



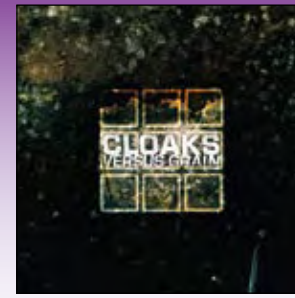
**STEVE BUG**  
*Collaboratory CD/2x12"*

Poker Flat proudly presents *Collaboratory*, Steve Bug's fourth artist album. Like the title suggests, Steve has joined forces here with luminaries such as Donnacha Costello, Paris The Black Fu (Detroit Grand Pubahs), Clé and Simon Flower. The whole album breathes an analog warmth which underlines the organic character of a fantastic, song-based album.



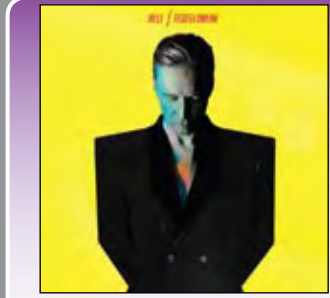
**PIXEL**  
*The Drive CD*

With organic sound patterns created from guitar amplifier feedback, *The Drive* is Jon Egeskov's soundtrack to an imaginary road movie, evoking rugged landscapes and rocket take-offs. "*Reaches into your subconscious and yanks out whatever images are lodged in there.*" —Boomkat



**CLOAKS**  
*Versus Grain CD*

Merging killer beats with an endless tide of digital feedback, this album of speaker-killing floor shakers from dubstep destroyers Cloaks recalls the extremity of *Wolf Eyes* or *Neubauten* as much as it does the dark hooks of *Burial*. A truly unique ear-fucking.



**DJ HELL**  
*Teufelswerk 2CD/3LP*

This is DJ Hell's masterpiece, a towering double album featuring vocal contributions from Bryan Ferry and P. Diddy. Beautiful, dark and soulful, this is a milestone in German electronic music. "...one of the most ambitious and cogent dance music albums of, well, all time." —The Guardian



**TRENTEMØLLER** *Harbour Boat Trips 01: Copenhagen CD*

The Danish maverick's first-ever mix CD is a refreshingly unorthodox meltdown of post-rock, neo-alternative and electronic bliss, featuring unlikely and inspiring selections from Grouper, Suicide, Gravenhurst, Caribou, Khan, Soft Cell, Four Tet, Nic Endo, and more.



**KONRAD BLACK**  
*Watergate 03 CD*

Third volume in Watergate Records' series of mixes dedicated to the sounds of the Watergate Club in Berlin. This time curated by Konrad Black, his signature dark vision of techno shines throughout this utterly seamless mix. Artists include: Raudive, Loco Dice, Onur Özer, Matthew Dear & Seth Troxler, Louderbach, and Ben Klock.



**ATA EBTEKAR & THE IRANIAN ORCHESTRA**  
*Ornamentalism CD*

Ata Ebtekar (aka *Sote*) and The Iranian Orchestra For New Music perform works by legendary Iranian avant-garde electronic composer, Alireza Mashayekhi. Electronic harmonies and soundscapes are programmed into the sonic palette of Western classical music and Persian instrumentation for a truly unique musical experience.



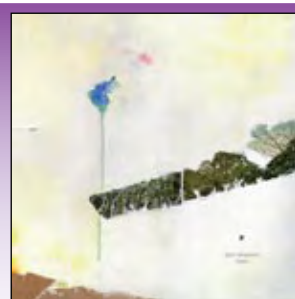
**DAVID LAST VS. ZULU**  
*Musically Massive CD*

The debut collaboration between beatmaker David Last and dancehall vocalist Zulu is funk without borders; fast-paced, bouncing and indescribably good. "*David Last's sense of rhythm is as developed as any rap, dancehall, broken beat, or dubstep scientist you'd care to throw up.*" —Pitchfork



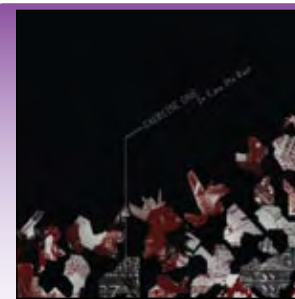
**OLIVER HUNTEMANN**  
*H-3 2CD/3x12"*

After his great remixes for Depeche Mode and Underworld, veteran DJ/producer Oliver Huntemann presents an epic long-player of unpretentious dancefloor music, combining elements of techno, house and electro. Featuring one of the biggest tracks of the year, "Dios," co-produced with Dubfire.



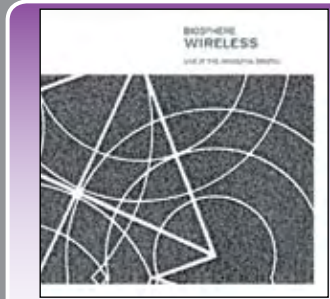
**MARK TEMPLETON**  
*Inland CD*

Mark Templeton continues his humble electro-acoustic balancing act, using stringed instruments, field recordings and his own voice to forge an identity alongside the likes of Fennesz and Mountains. "*With every sound, he builds something compelling, beautiful and meticulously crafted.*" —Resonance



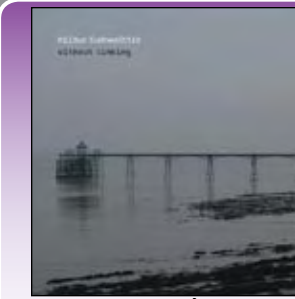
**EXERCISE ONE**  
*In Cars We Rust CD*

This is the debut full-length release by Berlin duo Exercise One. DJs know them as crafters of cracking tracks on wax. Clubbers know them as an unstoppable live act. *In Cars We Rust* is rounded out by sounds we've never heard from them before: gorgeous, enveloping ambient tracks; soundtrack-ready synthesizer ballads; even retro-futurist electro-pop.



**BIOSPHERE** *Wireless: Live At The Arnolfini, Bristol CD*

Touch presents the first live album by Norway's Geir Jenssen aka Biosphere, recorded live at The Arnolfini, Bristol in 2007 by the doyen of environmental sound recordists, Chris Watson. "*Like (Brian) Eno, Jenssen is a master of using music of a frequently quiet and unobtrusive nature to generate tension and an often palpable mood.*" —Tinymixtapes



**HILDUR GUDNADÓTTIR**  
*Without Sinking CD*

Touch presents a new solo release from a classically-trained Icelandic cellist who has become an essential staple in modern music composition. Known for her haunting, evocative soundscapes, as well as collaborations with múm and Pan Sonic, *Without Sinking* is a work of delicately-layered, cello-based ruminations with guest Jóhann Jóhannsson.





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# ALBUM REVIEWS

6/09



## PREFUSE 73

*Everything She Touched  
Turned Ampexian*

Warp / UK / CD

## DIAMOND WATCH WRISTS

*Ice Capped at Both Ends*

Warp / UK / CD

## SAVATH & SAVALAS

*La Llama*

Stones Throw / US / CD



GUILLERMO SCOTT HERREN PHOTO: TIM SACCENTI



GUILLERMO SCOTT HERREN  
EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS  
WITH A TRIO OF NEW ALBUMS.

In the lightning-quick world of music, it's easy to forget about an artist like Guillermo Scott Herren (a.k.a. Prefuse 73). Although the man has been firmly entrenched in hip-hop's leftfield for more than a decade, nearly two years have passed since his latest release—quite an absence given Herren's previously prolific release schedule and music heads' increasingly shrinking attention spans. Perhaps sensing that the fitted New Era crowd had all taken to bumping Flying Lotus in the meantime, Herren has returned with not just one, but three new albums. While all of these records are quite different, collectively they do serve as a clear statement that Guillermo Scott Herren is not someone to be forgotten.

First up is the new Prefuse 73 album, *Everything She Touched Turned Ampexian*. Eschewing digital recording techniques for Ampex tape, Herren's already emotive take on hip-hop production has been bathed in a warm analog hiss. Slight changes aside, listeners will quickly recognize Herren's IDM-flavored beats, drone-y vocal samples, and ultra-precise editing. A few guests take part in the proceedings (Claudia Deheza from School of Seven Bells, The Gaslamp Killer, Zach Hill), but micro-editing renders their contributions virtually anonymous—Herren is front-and-center here, and this just might be his finest work since 2003's classic *One Word Extinguisher*. Blowing through 29 tracks in 48 minutes, *Everything* certainly harkens back to *One Word Extinguisher's* predilection for rapid-fire edits and audio snippets over drawn-out compositions. While Herren is a little manic, frantically jumping from one sonic idea to another (even within the course of a 60-second-or-less song), his expert construction weaves the litany of ideas into a coherent sonic tapestry. Ultimately, the individual tracks on

*Everything* are meaningless—the album plays like a long-lost radio transmission and is best digested as a whole.

On the other hand, *Ice Capped at Both Ends* is all about individual songs. Created in tandem with virtuoso drummer Zach Hill (of Hella and countless other projects) under the moniker Diamond Watch Wrists, the album finds Herren taking a break from beat-making to focus on guitar and lead vocals. With Hill behind the drum kit and Herren sitting at the mixing board, one might expect some sort of frenetic sonic clusterfuck, but *Ice Capped* is a surprising exercise in restraint that recalls the psychedelic offerings of late-'60s American singer-songwriters. The vocals are plainly and melodically delivered, although they do tend to drone a bit, courtesy of Herren's studio wizardry (which also lends some pleasant patches of audio fuzz). While the most remarkable thing about the music may be the identities of those who created it, the debut album from Diamond Watch Wrists is certainly pleasant.

Herren is no stranger to stepping outside his comfort zone, most notably via his ongoing avant-folk collaboration with Eva Puyuelo Muns under the name Savath & Savalas. *La Llama* is the project's third full-length, and while it occasionally sounds more like a collection of sonic experiments than proper songs, the album is easily the group's most fully realized effort to date. Herren and Muns have roots in Barcelona, and the music continues to reference the city's mysterious wonder, but *La Llama* also mines the sunny pop psychedelia of early '70s Brazil. Yet this is no easily digestible world-music act—the music may be soothing, but there are plenty of edgy production strategies and aural oddities to explore. *Shawn Reynaldo*





## CAGE

### *Depart From Me*

Def Jux / US / CD

*Depart From Me* is a bold step for Cage, especially after his last album, 2005's *Hell's Winter*, soured some long-time fans by abandoning his drug-addled shock rap for sober and intense introspection. While casting out his demons, Cage veers further left, sonically. With much of the production handled by F. Sean (Hatebreed), *Depart From Me* is full of guitar-heavy, synthy, dark, and ominous soundscapes. "Nothing Left to Say," a response to longtime collaborator and friend Camu Tao's passing, opens with a spoken-word intro before El-P launches into an industrial frenzy. Cage is still sick and twisted—"I Never Knew You," slow and brooding, finds him stalking and strangling a woman. He does stray a little too far at times (the new-wavey "Katie's Song" and punky "Kick Rocks") but, for the most part, *Depart From Me* is a welcome progression.

*Zoneil Maharaj*



## MIKA MIKO

### *We Be Xuxa*

Post Present Medium / US / CD

If Mika Miko wanted to make the perfect SoCal punk album, they just might have succeeded with *We Be Xuxa*. Combining the anthemic spirit of L.A. punk legends like Black Flag and The Germs with the sax-fueled bounce of X-Ray Spex, the band's second full-length finds the girls (plus their new male drummer) swaggering their way through 12 songs in 22 minutes. Mika Miko may not be polished, but that's not the point—*We Be Xuxa* is a brash and bratty lo-fi romp. While the bass-driven "I Got a Lot (New New New)" might be the closest thing to a sing-along tune, there's plenty of fun to be had here. "Turkey Sandwich" (both the original version and the twangy "Barnyard Mix") is a lighthearted goof, while rockers like "Blues Not Speed" and "Wild Bore" are sure to ignite the mosh pit at your local punk hideout.

*Shawn Reynaldo*

#### KONRAD BLACK

##### WATERGATE 03

*Watergate*/GER/CD

A co-founder of the Wagon Repair label, Berlin-via-Vancouver techno producer Konrad Black's sound is rooted in the patience of minimal techno, but draws on drum & bass for certain low-end sounds. *Watergate 03*, the eponymous Berlin club's third mix, follows Onur Özer's and Sascha Funke's initial entries with a slightly moodier selection. The exclusive tracks here—"Siamese Connection," a collaboration between Black and Martin Buttrich, and the superb "Walking on the Hands That Follow Me," a preview of Mathew Jonson's upcoming 12"—pinpoint the mix's spooky, cusp-of-Sunday undercurrent. The Matthew Dear and Seth Troxler collaboration and Loco Dice selection are par for the (post-) minimal course, though Black's deft hand leaves a few loose stitches for unexpected details to come sputtering through. *Brandon Bussolini*

#### BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW

##### EATING US

*Graveface*/US/CD

Touted as the first fully hi-fi BMSR album, *Eating Us* keeps the Pennsylvania band's fuzzy psychedelia intact. Produced by David Fridmann (the only producer that frontman Tobacco would work with), the album is another collection of sunny pop tunes adorned with twinkling electronics, vintage synths, delicately strummed guitar melodies, and sweetly inhuman vocals (delivered via vocoder). While the music certainly owes a debt to the past work of bands like Air and Lemon Jelly, that doesn't make the zoned-out pop of "Born on a Day the Sun Didn't Rise," the wonky noodling of "Tooth Decay," or the banjo-meets-'70s-planetarium-soundtrack vibe of "American Face Dust" any less enjoyable. *Eating Us* may not be stuffed with surprises, but it's a fine effort. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### BLANK DOGS

##### UNDER AND UNDER

*In the Red*/US/CD

While the man behind Blank Dogs may be a mystery, it's no secret that the Brooklynite has a serious knack for crafting post-punky songs and dipping them in layer after layer of delicious distortion. After a seemingly endless stream of limited-edition cassette and vinyl releases, *Under and Under* is the first proper Blank Dogs album. Yes, he's friends with the Vivian Girls (who lend some back-up vocals to the record), but Blank Dogs owes a much greater debt to '80s post-punk and new wave than '60s girl groups. Early Cure is an obvious reference, but the spooky keys and bassy vocals of tracks like "No Compass" and "Setting Fire to Your House" are more like a lo-fi Psychedelic Furs. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### BUSDRIVER

##### JHELLI BEAM

*Anti*-US/CD

Though he may be a rapper, most hip-hop fans probably hate Busdriver. Whenever the quirky, loquacious Los Angeleno hits the studio, he returns with a body of work that is anything but standard rap fare (a topic he addresses on "Least Favorite Rapper"). His latest, *Jhelli Beam*, picks up where 2007's *Roadkill Overcoat* left off, but with a heavier electronic sound. It's what you'd expect from an album that features battle rapper Nocando, Islands' Nick Thornburn, Deerhoof's John Dietrich, and beatwork from Daedelus, Nosaj Thing, and Free the Robots—a sonic soup that mixes everything from classical, jazz, and indie rock atop searing electronic beats. But, as usual, dissecting Busdriver's rapid-fire lyrical absurdities can be a trying task. *Zoneil Maharaj*

#### CLAUDE VONSTROKE

##### FABRIC 46

*Fabric*/UK/CD

Claude VonStroke's *Fabric 46* mix begins like a stoner session overtaken by a pair of funky, horn-infused tracks by Ekkohaus, followed immediately by some cheeky, cut-up soul on his own remix of Bootsy Collins' "The Greasy Beat." Shifting gears, the middle of the disc finds the San Francisco producer and Dirtybird founder cruising along a shared bassline through a wasteland of house music, eventually breaking the uniformity with a double-track combination of Xpansul & Daweed's tickled "Pilsner" and Marc Houle's hyper-plinky "Dirty Dirty," which then bleeds into German DJ Dinamoe's squelchy '90s-style tech-house number, "Maceo." Over the course of 20 tracks, VonStroke blends his disparate influences into a seamless impression of his at-times unpredictable style. *Lulu McAllister*

#### DEASTRO

##### MOONDAGGER

*Ghostly International*/US/CD

*Moondagger* finds wide-eyed Detroit young'un Randolph Chabot crafting an electro-pop debut that oozes romanticism from some distant galaxy. The record swathes catchy new-wave melodies in dreamy layers of fuzzy guitars and synths with a dash of dazed, Panda Bear-style surf rock and John Maus-ian experimentalism. Opener "Biophelia" is a driving ballad, sprinkled with starry synths and distant, reverberated vocals, while the tonally quirky "Pyramid Builders" is a baroque instrumental with softened harpsichord and churning percussion. Meanwhile, the World's Longest Song Name award goes to *Moondagger*'s centerpiece track, "Daniel Johnston Was Stabbed in the Heart With the Moondagger by the King of Darkness and His Ghost Is Writing This Song as a Warning to All of Us." *Lulu McAllister*

#### DIRTY PROJECTORS

##### BITTE ORCA

*Domino*/US/CD

Since its formation by Yale-educated music student Dave Longstreth in 2002, Brooklyn-based indie outfit Dirty Projectors has released a Don Henley-themed concept album, an album of re-interpreted Black Flag songs, and a single with David Byrne. The band's eighth studio album finds them finally diving into their own brand of quirky, sweet, and experimental pop-rock. On "Cannibal Resource," bass chases retro guitar underneath a unique blend of Longstreth's falsetto and female vocals; the effect is simultaneously angelic and eccentric. "Useful Chamber" is an opus unfolding in distinctly different sections across restrained percussion, ambient vocals, and edgy electric guitar. Stripping down to a handful of essentials, Dirty Projectors has created something both interesting and complicated while avoiding unnecessary ornamentation. *Lulu McAllister*

#### ABE DUQUE

##### DON'T BE SO MEAN

*Process*/UK/CD

Although he's been around since the mid-'90s "Disco Bloothbath" era of NYC techno, Abe Duque was never as flashy (or wasted) as his Limelight peers. However, what Duque lacked in Ketamine addiction he more than made up for with quality production, a secret finally unearthed with the 2004's Blake Baxter-led "What Happened?" Now, three albums deep, *Don't Be So Mean* sees Duque carrying on similarly wistful "back in the day" vibes without being too much of an old man about it. Sure, there's a lot for old techno heads to like here—the Dan Bell acid squiggles on "Tonight Is Your Answer" or the spacey '90s float of "Getting There," but Duque isn't just banking on nostalgia triggers. *Brandon Ivers*

#### EAR PWR

##### SUPER ANIMAL BROTHERS III

*Carpark*/US/CD

Spastic North Carolina duo Ear Pwr sure is adorable. Fueled by Devin Booze's breakneck beats and advanced synth skills, the music is designed with two things in mind—fun and dancing. Their hyperactive pace and lo-fi aesthetic is certainly

reminiscent of artists like Dan Deacon (the duo actually moved to Baltimore recently to play more shows and be around more like-minded bands), but Sarah Reynolds' vocals are surprisingly melodic and prevent the incessantly pounding *Super Animal Brothers III* from becoming an obnoxious listen. The album could easily soundtrack any DIY dance party, but songs like "Future Eyes," "Beam of Light," and the title track are especially sweet. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### EXERCISE ONE

##### IN CARS WE RUST

*Mobilee*/GER/CD

Retrofitting the results of their jam sessions and distilling them into bracing minimal beats, Marco Freivogel and Ingo Gansera create lively, long-form riffs on techno. *In Cars We Rust* doesn't meddle with jazz or big beat, instead trafficking in cold, metallic shades of sound and crisp percussion. "It's Happening Again" grinds through build-ups and breakdowns, a buzzing melody creeps across the slightly dissociative "Drunken Tinman," and "1994" contains a downtempo shuffle and bubbly synths that almost recall a sedated take on "Rez." The live studio concept allows the duo to quickly pivot within songs or play around with rhythms, making a convincing case that these producers need to be seen live. *Patrick Sisson*

#### HOT CHIP

##### A BUGGED OUT MIX

*New State*/UK/CD

Their contribution to the *DJ-Kicks* series instantly added "DJ heroes" to the long CV collected by

U.K. electro-geek pop band Hot Chip. While most DJs delineate themselves along partisan micro-genre lines, these boys spin like actual *music fans*—something that fits perfectly into *Bugged Out's* double-disc format. There's plenty of minimal techno and blurry house centered around the kinds of randomized nerdy affectations Hot Chip adores, like Dominik Eulberg's textured flack and the bad-dream 808 drive of "Cosmic Sandwich." But it's the second disc that truly shines, finding common ground between steel-drum bands, Luther Vandross, Gang Gang Dance, and the Andrews Sisters. That it works is a testament to good taste—and a decent sense of humor. *Justin Hopper*

#### MAXIMO PARK

##### QUICKEN THE HEART

*Warp*/UK/CD

When this U.K. neo-post-punk band burst onto the scene with 2005's *A Certain Trigger*, the band's workmanlike spirit—not to mention its Fall- and Wire-esque songwriting—was quickly embraced on both sides of the Atlantic. The band's presence on Warp—certainly worth some cred points—was always unusual, but with the release of Maximo Park's third album, *Quicken the Heart*, it has become downright confusing. The Newcastle lads have all but abandoned their post-punk inklings in favor of tepid, would-be stadium rock colored by synth flourishes and paint-by-numbers pop melodies. Perhaps this is a clever play to win the hearts of folks who find Franz Ferdinand a little too edgy, but this is a major creative step backwards. *August Howard*

#### MISS KITTIN & THE HACKER

##### TWO

*Nobody's Bizzness*/GER/CD

Eight years removed from *First Album*, which appeared at the height of the electroclash gold rush, Caroline Herve and Michel Amato return with *Two*, a minimal update to their original formula. Their defiantly synthetic beats still churn along like Cybotron thickened with a dose of cornstarch, and no one delivers glassy-eyed, semi-grammatical shouts through a megaphone quite like Miss Kittin, but much of *Two* feels calculated, as if it was deliberately designed for the catwalk. Despite the ridiculously blank "Ray Ban," enough of *Two*





## MAJOR LAZER

### *Guns Don't Kill People...Lasers Do*

Downtown / US / CD

*Baile* funk, Baltimore club, fidget house, *kuduro*, M.I.A., Santigold... these are just some of the sounds and artists that Diplo and Switch have championed in recent years. While the two super-producers certainly haven't acted alone, they are the *de facto* leaders of the "global bass" movement. On *Guns Don't Kill People*, the duo teams up to tackle yet another third-world sound: dancehall. Recorded in Jamaica with a slew of A-list MCs, the album is an up-and-down affair that sounds like, well, Diplo and Switch making dancehall. While pot anthem "Mary Jane" is a juvenile misfire, digital bangers like "When You Hear the Bassline" and especially "Pon De Floor" (featuring Vybz Kartel) properly rave up the proceedings. The dulcet tones of Mr. Vegas and Jovi Rockwell sweetly color the chilled reggae of "Can't Stop Now," and the riddim fashioned from an AutoTuned crying infant on "Baby" is pretty irresistible. *Shawn Reynaldo*

excites by delving deeper into the subconscious (the crashing, Nord-led aggression of "Indulgence") or stepping out into the sunlight (a goofy, cheerful cover of "Suspicious Minds") to justify marking a calendar eight years from now for a *Three*. *Rob Geary*

#### MOBY

##### WAIT FOR ME

Mute/US/CD

Since the release of his 1999 opus *Play*, Moby has been busy—flirting with mainstream pop, collaborating with international superstars, and even revisiting his raver roots. Yet, for all his dabbling, none of these efforts has achieved anything approaching the success of *Play*. *Wait for Me* is unlikely to break that streak, but its somber restraint is more in line with *Play* than anything else he's done recently. Recording in his home studio, Moby hasn't started recycling old gospel samples again, but the album's '90s Mo' Wax beats and sweeping strings certainly sound familiar. The folksier, female-voiced tunes are a little bland, but *Wait for Me* has enough bright spots to be licensed for a commercial or two. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### PHOENIX

##### WOLFGANG AMADEUS PHOENIX

Glassnote/US/CD

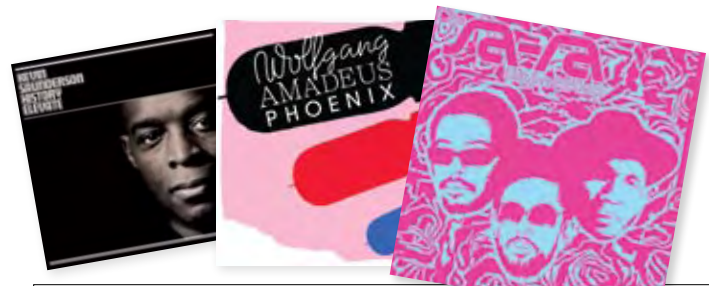
It's hard not to like Phoenix. The French quartet has spent the better part of the last decade making one infectiously sunny pop-rock tune after another. *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* is their fourth album, and it doesn't find the band undertaking any radical reinventions of their sound. Produced by Philippe Zdar of Cassius, the record perhaps features a little more electronic sheen than usual ("Rome"), but for the most part, Phoenix does what they do best—craft breezy pop songs with just a hint of funk to get your hips shaking. The toe-tapping disco-pop of "Lisztomania" and the fuzzy bounce of "1901" rank among the band's best work, and will undoubtedly be stuck on repeat on many an iPod this summer. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### PRINS THOMAS

##### LIVE AT ROBERT JOHNSON VOL. 2

Robert Johnson/GER/CD

Norwegian DJ/producer Prins Thomas' 2007 *Cosmo Galactic Prism* mix exhibited his voluminous idea of what cosmic-disco entails: space rockers Hawkwind, jazzman Bob James, avant-disco producer The Mole, and country-funk combo Area Code 615. For *Live at Robert Johnson, Vol. 2*, Thomas hews closer to disco conventions—whether they be loved-up, libidinous, or suspenseful. Of the former mode, the Balearic blissfulness of Low Motion Disco's "Love Love Love (Still Going Remix)" and "Gallery Oslo" by Kåre & The Cavemen stand out; among the latter, Cage & Aviary's "Giorgio Carpenter" conjures those composers' dark atmospheres. While the mix suffers from several surprisingly inelegant transitions, the strength and diversity of Prins' selections overcome his technical flaws. Hail the Oslo-motion disco king. *Dave Segal*



#### RUBIES

##### EXPLODE FROM THE CENTER

Telle/NOR/CD

After logging nearly seven years together in Bay Area ensemble Call and Response, Rubies' Simone Rubi and Terri Lowenthal have a solid pop pedigree. While the breezy funk and '70s vocal harmonies of songs like "Room Without a Key" and "Too Bright" sound like Call and Response, Part 2, the duo truly shines when they veer onto the dancefloor. "I Feel Electric" is a catchy slice of electro-disco that initially made the rounds as a single on the Italians Do It Better label. Although nothing else on *Explode From the Center* approaches that level of danceability, tracks like "Stand in a Line" and "Diamonds on Fire" are certainly strong enough to soundtrack a dance party in your bedroom. *August Howard*

#### SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS

##### NUCLEAR EVOLUTION: THE AGE OF LOVE

Ubiquity/US/CD

SA-RA's glorious reputation precedes them. Their Kanye West affiliation. The production work for the likes of Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, and John Legend. The Japan-only limited-run vinyl EP pressings. Reuniting with the Ubiquity label after five years, the L.A.-based SA-RA Creative Partners deliver their sophomore full-length in the form of these 17 superCalifunky tracks. Wedged between sleaze and supernatural, *Nuclear Evolution* drops bombs on the sonic spectrum, from sun-bleached bossa nova ("Spacefruit") and glitchy instrumental funk romps ("Move Your Ass") to boom bip Iceberg Slim fables ("Traffika"). With assists from Badu ("Dirty Beauty"), veteran saxophonist Gary Bartz, and newcomer Noni Lamar ("I Swear"), this megawatt thumper further cements Sa-Ra's status as the preeminent innovators of tomorrow's soundscapes. *Rico* "Superbizzee" *Washington*



## NOSAJ THING

### *Drift*

Alpha Pup / US / CD

As the West Coast's so-called "lazer bass" scene has blown up in the past year or so, Nosaj Thing (a.k.a. L.A. producer Jason Chung) has been one of those artists you often hear about without actually hearing any music. With the release of his debut album, *Drift*, it's a safe bet that you'll be hearing a whole lot of Nosaj Thing's tunes from here on out. Settling somewhere between Flying Lotus' otherworldly jazz and The Glitch Mob's crunked-up floor-fillers, *Drift* is an impeccably produced record that sounds amazing in headphones but also has enough bump to hit the dancefloor every now and then. With its sliced-up vocals and buzzing synths, the haunting "Coat of Arms" is a clear standout, but "Light #1" and "Light #2" have enough funk to get your head nodding, and album closer "Lords" doubles as a cathartic religious experience. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### KEVIN SAUNDERSON

##### HISTORY ELEVATE

KMS/US/CD

As one-third of preeminent techno crew the Belleville Three, Kevin Saunderson's name seems as big as the genre he helped shape. The two-disc *History Elevate* handily collects tracks from his remixing career along with remixes of his own work by old hands (Carl Craig) and relative young bucks (Joris Voorn). Though using Ableton and CDs to compile his Resident Advisor mix inflamed some trolls, Saunderson's own remixes put backlash to bed. Like a graphic designer who still works with Scotch tape and scissors, Saunderson's remixes have an unaccustomed heft and deliberateness to them. The second disc is more of a very good mix than a history lesson, but Saunderson's remixers rarely choke when tepping up to the master's plate. *Brandon Bussolini*

#### SERENGETI & POLYPHONIC

##### TERRADACTYL

Anticon/US/CD

On paper, the marriage of talented leftfield hip-hopppers Serengeti & Polyphonic seems like a match made in heaven. Geti's stream-of-consciousness flow easily matches up with the best of the Anticon MCs, and, at its best, recalls the vocal acrobatics of true giants like DOOM. Polyphonic's production is equally impressive—dude has more in common with Plaid and Boards of Canada than Timbaland. Yet all this talent doesn't make *Terradactyl* a particularly compelling listen. Geti's dense tongue-wagging is in serious need of a little bounce, yet Polyphonic's skittery electronics (which are probably better suited for an instrumental release) only clash with his partner's raps. With these kinds of irreconcilable differences, Serengeti & Polyphonic might need a divorce. *Shawn Reynaldo*

#### SND

##### AVANTISM

Raster-Noton/GER/CD

Glitch-techno's old faithful returns, delivering a full-length that's equally fascinating and frustrating. *Avantism* portrays SND at their most uncompromising, as they take little more than a thudding beat and a silken, R&B synth riff and contort them into shapes sublime and obscene for nearly an entire album. The group retains their knack for digging out bare traces of funk from

otherwise airless, mechanical rhythms, as best heard on Track 10. Still, they get awfully trapped within their rigid limits and end up punching walls until their knuckles bleed—too many rhythms are beaten into sputtering wrecks without care for the audience's attention. There are a thousand cracks in SND's glass prison but there's still no escape. *Cameron Macdonald*

#### TANYA MORGAN

##### BROOKLYNATI

Interdependent Media/US/CD

Tanya Morgan makes regular-ass rap music, but they do it exceptionally well. The second studio LP from this trio of (male) MCs, *Brooklynati* brings forth timeless beats and rhymes in the vein of Native Tongues. You won't find any trend-hopping, AutoTune, or electro-pop gimmicks here, just straight up boom bap. Tracks like "Bang N Boogie," with its simple drum break and horn loop, serve as reminders of the genre's origins, while lead single "So Damn Down" kicks it really old school with a loungey Rat Pack vibe. Clever marketing aside (Brooklynati is the name of a virtual city in Tanya Morgan's collective mind), the album features quality production by Brick Beats and the group's own Von Pea, and quality verses from Blu, Phonte, and other guests, which helps make *Brooklynati* TM's best work to date. *Zoneil Maharaj*

#### THE FIELD

##### YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Anti-/US/CD

Axel Willner faced daunting expectations when assembling *Yesterday and Today*, and while he continues to utilize the micro-sampling techniques and '90s trance sound palette that made his debut such a triumph, this is no rehashed sequel. "Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime" is a shoegazey version of the Korgis' tune that Beck famously covered for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and "Yesterday & Today" is a collaboration with Battles' drumming virtuoso John Stanier. These deviations aren't the album's strongest moments, but Willner isn't afraid to stretch his legs creatively or stretch his songs to epic lengths (album closer "Sequenced" surpasses the 15-minute mark). *Yesterday and Today* may not be a classic, but it could certainly soundtrack a quality chill-out room. *August Howard*

#### TIGA

##### CIAO!

Last Gang/CAN/CD

Anyone who kicks off their studio career with a reworking of Corey Hart's "Sunglasses at Night" obviously doesn't take themselves too seriously. But while Canadian DJ/producer Tiga has made a certain brand of electro-camp his signature, his new album just as often plays it straight, perhaps even too much. Produced with help from Jesper Dahlback and Soulwax, Tiga sticks mainly to uptempo, disco-influenced vocal house and techno, with slick production aimed at big rooms. Sure, there's "Sex O'Clock," with a leer so exaggerated it could be coming from a cartoon wolf, but there's also the 10-minute-plus finisher "Love Don't Dance Here Anymore," equal parts sad-eyed pop ballad and soulful club fare. None of this is groundbreaking, and the range is a bit narrow, but there's fun to be had here nonetheless. *Luciana Lopez*

#### TORTOISE

##### BEACONS OF ANCESTORSHIP

Thrill Jockey/US/CD

*It's All Around You* represented a nadir for Tortoise, as the veteran Chicago avant-rockers gave in to their blindest proclivities and forged a Muzak™ tribute to themselves. Nearly five years later, however, Tortoise has regained the inventiveness and excitement of its best work. *Beacons of Ancestorship* begins with perhaps Tortoise's greatest moment—"High Class Slim Came Floatin' In," where Terry Riley-esque organ ostinatos cycle above a badass prog riff and, later, a powerful, Can-like motorik chug. "Yinxianghechengqi" shocks with Big Black-like speed-metal funk; it's Tortoise's most aggressive track in years. Much of *Beacons* explores Tortoise's love of complex prog/fusion song structures and time signatures, but now they're infusing these qualities with more verve than previously. Tortoise got their groove back—finally. *Dave Segal*



Check out thousands more reviews at [XLR8R.com/reviews](http://XLR8R.com/reviews), including new albums from Abstract Rude, Alexander Nut, A.M. Architect, Ape School, Aun, Crocodiles, Faze Action, Kid 606, Kiki, Krazy Baldhead, Kush Arora, Men Without Pants, Monazite, Maayan Nidam, Pink Mountaintops, Ras G, Roedelius, Tenniscoats, Tiny Masters of Today, and more.



ARTISTS TO WATCH



PHOTO MARTIN COTTON

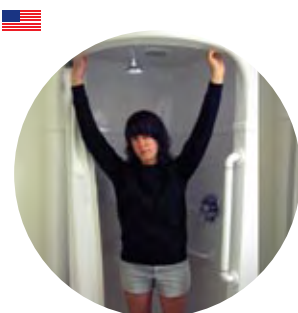
TODDLA T



Sheffield, U.K.

While the hype over bassline house has already begun to subside, Toddla T's dancehall-infused take on the sound is still revving up dancefloors on both sides of the Atlantic. The 23-year-old producer, born Tom Bell, grew up listening to "Biggie and right boyish hip-hop," but later opened his mind to more electronic sounds once he began sampling, and eventually playing, Sheffield's underground rave circuit. Work in a local studio allowed Toddla T to hone his production chops, and in 2008 he started unleashing bass-heavy tracks like "Fill Up Mi Portion" and "Soundtape Killin'." Remixes for Hot Chip, Little Boots, Ghislain Poirier, and Róisín Murphy have followed, along with a monthly residency at Fabric and an invitation to join Hervé and Sinden's all-star Machines Don't Care collective. He also recently released his debut full-length, *Skanky Skanky*, on 1965 Records.

[myspace.com/toddlat](http://myspace.com/toddlat)

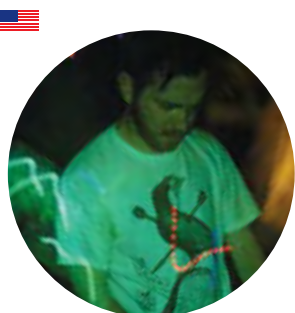


EXPLODE INTO COLORS

Portland, OR

Although two members of Explode Into Colors met in a West African drumming class at Evergreen State College, this Portland-based all-girl trio isn't making crunchy hippie music. With a percussion-heavy sound that recalls bands like The Slits, the band is another entry in the Pacific Northwest's long history of angular post-punk bands with a pop heart. Signed to Kill Rock Stars, their debut album is already in the works, but in the meantime the girls will be releasing a series of 7-inch singles and curating local art shows under the Explode Into Colors name.

[myspace.com/explodeintocolors](http://myspace.com/explodeintocolors)



GHOSTS ON TAPE

San Francisco, CA

The past year or so has seen the term "tropical bass" increasingly banded about, but few artists encapsulate the idea like Ghosts on Tape. Using only a pair of antiquated samplers with beats stored on floppy disks, St. Louis transplant Ryan Merry concocts a raw, speaker-blowing mix of electro, grime, dancehall, reggaeton, and more. Mary Anne Hobbs recently tapped him for an exclusive mix on her BBC radio show, and his debut *Predator Mode* EP is slated to drop soon on Glasgow's Wireblock label.

[myspace.com/ghostsontapesf](http://myspace.com/ghostsontapesf)

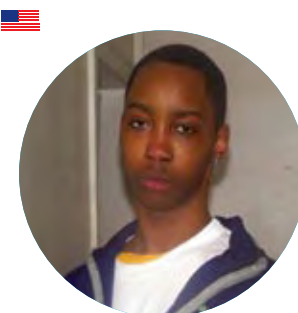


TC

Bristol, U.K.

With drum & bass suffering from a perceived lack of creativity, an artist like TC (a.k.a. Tom Casswell) is a real breath of fresh air. Armed with frenetic beats and filtered synths, this Bristol producer is taking the genre back toward its rave-culture roots. TC's tunes have been blowing up dancefloors since the 2007 release of his debut full-length *Evolution*, and his recent remix of Kid Cudi's "Day 'N' Nite" has taken things to another level, with even the BBC putting his version on blast. Dubstep fans should also check out the Caspa remix of TC's "Where's My Money."

[myspace.com/tc](http://myspace.com/tc)



DJ NATE

Chicago, IL

Born Nathan Clark on the west side of Chicago, the youthful DJ Nate is a multifaceted artist who heads up the Get It Squad and cites rapping, acting, singing, dancing, and basketball among his many talents. All that's well and good, but here at *XLR8R*, we can't get enough of his otherworldly contributions to the world of juke. Swapping out a steady 4/4 for skittery, irregular beats and layering them with repetitive, yet oddly compelling melodies, DJ Nate has carved out a unique sound that retains juke's traditional breakneck pace while pushing the genre in wildly experimental new directions.

[lottonate.webs.com](http://lottonate.webs.com)

LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS: THEMSELVES

Keeping track of the ever-fluctuating Anticon roster is no easy task, but the name Themselves continues to ring out, even though the pairing of label founders Doseone and Jel hasn't produced a proper album for more than six years. While the Oakland duo's 1999 debut, *Them*, and 2002 follow-up, *The No Music*, helped put Anticon on the map, subsequent years have found Doseone and Jel occupied with projects like 13 & God (in collaboration with The Notwist) and Subtle, not to mention their respective solo efforts. Now in 2009, Themselves is again front-and-center. The pair recently dropped *theFREEhoudini* mixtape, and a new album is slated for later in the year. We recently caught up with Doseone on tour and asked him to tell us about the tunes Themselves have been bumping on the road. *Shawn Reynaldo* [myspace.com/themselves](http://myspace.com/themselves)

THE LONG LOST  
WOEBEGONE (FLYING LOTUS REMIX)

Ninja Tune/UK/12

We checked this one in the van, set against the deserts and deliberate constructions of the Las Vegas outskirts. The music proved cooler than Vegasness. I had never heard Alfred Darlington's wife sing so I was excited. She throws a lovely voice indeed, and Flying Lotus' beat is dope proper. Reminds us of the classic DJ Krush I used to bump in my youngs.

AA  
ESSENTIAL ENTERTAINMENT

Softspot Music/US/7

A friend passed me this reissue, and although this is not the color of music I usually bump, it sounds fresh. At first I thought it was a little derivative; however, considering that this record was cut in '81, I am sure it's a case of the creative chicken before the egg—these guys are a good egg preceding all the post-post-punk chickens I have since heard.

FLYING LOTUS  
L.A. 2X3

Warp/UK/12

This record is the raw. More importantly, it's a meet-and-greet for L.A.'s new blood-in beats—a must cop. Ras G's remix—this dude is kinda the bee's knees! His beats are just plain thick and I haven't really heard anything quite like what he is doing... so damn ruff, my neck just starts nodding, and my head catches up. I loved the drone and ambient splay as well.

SLUGABED  
SLUGABEATMIXX

Stuffrecords/UK/podcast

Not a conventional "single" to begin with, but where are the lines today, anyway? This 10-minute beat sampler is as raw as the stuff found on the Lotus 12". Sluga being a 19-year-old kid from Bath, England is even more surprising. The mix throws in a new stomping beat almost every minute, each one as neck-straining as the one before it. Keep an eye on this kid.



PHOTO MATHEW SCOTT

June Releases from **ESL Music**

**Ancient Astronauts - June 9**  
*We Are To Answer*  
"a block-rockin' boom-bappin' sonic tour-de-force."

**Ocoté Soul Sounds - June 23**  
*Coconut Rock*  
"...an unparalleled journey through sonic realms beyond."

[www.eslmusic.com](http://www.eslmusic.com) [www.myspace.com/eslmusic](http://www.myspace.com/eslmusic)





## IN THE STUDIO: MEDASYN

LADY SOVEREIGN'S PRODUCER TAKES GRIME OUT OF THE PLAYSTATION AND INTO THE MIXING DESK.

As Lady Sovereign's right-hand man, Hackney-based Gabriel Olegavich (a.k.a. Medasyn) has the difficult task of creating polished genres on the fly. Wedged somewhere between grime, hip-hop, electro, and straight-up pop, the beats he and Sovereign come up with are often inspired by gritty underground styles, but they still require well-honed pop instincts and methods. As such, there isn't much room for shoddy PlayStation beats or murky mixes—the tracks on Sov's new album, *Jigsaw*, are about as radio-friendly as it gets. Olegavich filled us in on how he builds that polish without losing the natural feel.

### **XLR8R: CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT SIGNAL PATH FOR VOCALS?**

Medasyn: I've been building the studio up for a long time now, but maybe six or seven years ago I got a Soundtracs [Inline 36] analog mixing desk. That's a big part of the sound, since everything runs through it. On the front-end, I use a Neumann M 147 tube [microphone], which is really nice—I think it has a bit more body than the U87. That goes into a Chandler Germanium pre-amp that I got in New York about a year ago. Prior to that, I was using the pre-amps on the mixing desk. Now, pretty much all the vocals for *Jigsaw* were recorded through the Chandler.

### **HOW MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE DID RECORDING THROUGH A NICER PRE-AMP MAKE?**

It's amazing; I should have gotten it years ago. It just adds something to the signal—this sort of smoothness. Some of the frequencies just *feel* better. And after working with a few female MCs besides Sovereign, I've found you have to be really careful with some of the mid-range, especially around 2k. It can get quite poky and in-your-face. But with a nice pre-amp, there's a lot less frequency you have to tame—it gives a much better signal to start with.

### **ARE YOUR BEATS DONE IN HARDWARE AS WELL?**

Actually, I use Logic. The ESX sampler gets quite a bit of use as I've built up a pretty huge collection of drum sounds for it. In the past, I used Akai samplers, and I've got an MPC, too, but in the U.K., there's definitely more of a Logic culture than, say, an MPC culture. But I still play beats off a keyboard, and try to quantize them as little as possible—just enough to add a little bit of rigidity so it'll still fit with other pieces, like guitar.

### **SPEAKING OF GUITAR, THERE'S A LOT OF TRADITIONAL "ACOUSTIC" INSTRUMENTATION ON *JIGSAW*. DID YOU LAYER IN THOSE PARTS AS YOU WENT, OR WAS IT A MORE PIECED-TOGETHER LOOP APPROACH?**

Almost everything on the new album was done as we went. With the exception of the underlying beat for "Jigsaw," which I had originally done with another project in mind, the beats largely came together with Sovereign and I in the studio together. I'd be programming drums, for example, and she'd vibe off it. It was an exchange, like, "This part sounds good," or "Let's try guitar here." And I think that's the best way to work—it feels more "right" when there's that exchange. Even if I added some synth lines in after she'd gone home or whatever, having the root of the song be collaborative was important.

### **THERE'S A LOT OF INTERPLAY BETWEEN YOUR BASSLINES AND THE KICK DRUMS ON THE ALBUM. IS IT EVER TOUGH TO GET THOSE ELEMENTS MIXED TOGETHER PROPERLY?**

When we first set up my studio, we put this bass trap in the ceiling, and sometimes I *still* get really paranoid about it. *Am I hearing all the bass*, and that sort of thing. But yeah, that can be a funny one. There is, of course, the safe way of doing it, which is using sidechain compression with the kick and bassline—that way the sounds won't really clash because you can make one get ducked by the other. That was used to a ridiculous extreme on "I Got You Dancing."

### **DID YOU LEAN TOWARDS ANY SPECIFIC GEAR FOR CREATING BASS SOUNDS?**

I find the Korg MS-10 is really good for when I want to make some kind of crazy pitch-bend bass noises or filter sweeps. It's got a very tough sound to it, too—it doesn't have that same older, warmer sound like, say, a [Roland] Jupiter 4. It can also be a lot quicker than some of the plug-ins because you've got all the knobs in front of you—you just fiddle around with it, and boom, you've got the sound you need. For those certain things, plug-ins can actually be more complicated.

*Jigsaw* is out now on [Midget.myspace.com/medasn](http://Midget.myspace.com/medasn)



IN MEDASYN'S STUDIO: NEUMANN M 147 TUBE MIC, GERMANIUM PRE-AMP, LOGIC PRO.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: TOMAS HOEFDING, JEPPE KJELLBERG, TOMAS BARFOD

## ARTIST TIPS: WHOMADEWHO

*The Plot* (Gomma), the latest long-player from Copenhagen, Denmark-based three-piece WhomadeWho, finds the group churning out the sort of sweat-stained, mutant techno-pop that might even ruffle some of Philip Oakey's feathers on a good day—with a few Zeppelin riffs and falsetto vocals à la Josh Homme tossed in for added measure. Hell, the Queens of the Stone Ager is even a fan, and recently covered “Space For Rent” at one of his shows. We recently spoke with bassist/vocalist Tomas Hoefding about some of *The Plot's* essential ingredients. *Chris Sabbath*

### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

To start, we usually program a beat, plug in the bass and guitar, and jam for about 10 minutes. Then we go get a coffee and listen to what we did. If we like it, we make a rough edit, picking out the most interesting parts, and then we loop them. Perhaps we'll plug in a synth and then jam on top of the edit. Our studio sessions are rarely more than three hours long. After recording, we bring home the edit, and maybe Jeppe [Kjellberg] or I do some vocals on top, and Tomas [Barfod] may do some funky programming. It's a very anarchistic/organic process. I guess part of the WhomadeWho sound is all the outtakes that you would normally not use—we use them everywhere.

### BASS

In WhomadeWho, the bass is always quite loud in the mix. I have been a bass player for many years in mainly rock bands, and I always use a digital interface and a mic on some cool old bass rig. Barfod, in whose studio we recorded the first album, is a very lazy man, so of course he just has a jack cord and a pre-amp. And for this kind of music, my '77 Fender P-Bass never sounded better! Since then, I have always recorded without an amp, EQ, or computer. You play better this way, and you get a more “in your face” sound.

### GUITAR

Technology in software amps (even the one that comes with the cheap version of Logic) is getting so good that the advantage you get from recording a cool amp through expensive mics in big wooden rooms has a hard time competing with the creative freedom and intuitiveness of digital processing. It could be fun to let gear nerds do a blind test on which guitars on our new album are recorded through amps and which are just internally processed. Using Logic's internal guitar rig, you don't need to decide if the guitar riff is going to have a dirty rock sound or tight disco picking. You also have the ability to go straight to the musical idea without spending a lot of time getting the perfect amp sound and losing the momentum.

### DRUMS

We sometimes record a full kit to get the live feel, but for our kind of music it's so hard to make this sound right. Therefore, we mostly put up two mics, a hi-hat, and a snare, and play on top of a programmed kick. I am kind of a gear nerd, so I bought Lynx AD/DA converters and Neve pre-amps and all that kind of stuff. But I must admit that sometimes stuff recorded through Barfod's cheap shit sounds even better than expensive studio recordings.

### VOCALS

Jeppe and I have very different voices. I bought a Shure SM7A mic because I heard that Michael Jackson used it a lot, and because it was cheap. I use it for all my vocals, but it doesn't suit Jeppe's voice, so he either uses a big condenser mic or the mic in his MacBook. I almost always overdub my vocals; it makes it easier to listen to myself, and gives me the feeling that it's not me but “singer” Tomas coming out of the speakers.

[whomadewho.dk](http://whomadewho.dk)

# XLR8R TV

New episodes every Tuesday.



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**Genesis P-Orridge**  
is Better Than The Beatles



Episode No. 110  
**Vivian Girls Drink the Icing**



Episode No. 112  
**Michelle Blade:**  
California Über Alles

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For tour dates and more info check out [myspace.com/melissFX](http://myspace.com/melissFX)



## BACK ON TRAK

NATIVE INSTRUMENTS TRAKTOR SCRATCH PRO DJ PLATFORM



When it was introduced in 2000, Native Instruments' digital DJ "studio" was among the programs that couldn't quite separate themselves from tradition, or sometimes from one another. Traktor eventually pulled away from Rane Serato and the pack by targeting MIDI-assisted producers-turned-DJs without forsaking timecode tricksters and their itchy fingers. Now, Traktor Scratch Pro (an evolution rather than revolution of v3.4) further progresses into Ableton Live's heavy EFX-tweaking territory, with heightened loop/auto-sync features, reverb, grain, and scratch overlays, plus Allen & Heath- and Reaktor-derived multi-effects that are master clock- and signal-peak-aware.

Before tapping into all that signal-chain-mangling goodness, users first encounter the new four-deck GUI, which maximizes screen real estate and resolution while

never seeming oversaturated (thanks in part to more eye-pleasing color and contrast). Whether mixing internally or externally, the waveform cue control, visually enhanced crate, filter chaining, and preferences snapshots are additional improvements, and the periphery of each deck is outlined with administrative icons. The Traktor Scratch Pro software-hardware bundle includes the 96-kHz/24-bit USB 2.0 Audio 8 DJ, a channel-routing champ for for interfacing with those spinning platters, but even those working inside the box will benefit from this D/A's generous headroom.

With the increasingly stable version 1.1 available months after its initial release (and service patches released regularly), Traktor Pro offers precise control over a wealth of grid, resonance, tempo bend, and keyboard assignments (as well as integration with the

new MASCHINE groove trigger pads). There are small quibbles—some people report keylock artifacts, BPM detection issues, 14-bit MIDI requiring remapping, plus occasional CPU load/cueing-linked crackles—but a healthy developer's forum hones Traktor's performance core. For those drawn in by Traktor-driven performances from the likes of James Zabiela, Richie Hawtin, and Carl Cox, the forums are also an excellent resource for tutorials, such as how to sync with Ableton for MIDI-threaded VST instruments, punchy limiters, and more. With Scratch Pro, Traktor further cements its waveform-commanding track record. *Tony Ware*

MSRP: \$499 (\$299 upgrade);  
native-instruments.com



### INFRASONIK IL.EK.TRO SILICON SAMPLE PACK

Canada's Infrasonik, a company providing artist-processed, macro-enabled Ableton Live 7 packs, has turned to British expat Carl Finlow (a.k.a. Random Factor and Silicon Scally) to deliver almost 300 royalty-free clips (one-shots and loops) that run 24-bit 808 drums, bass, and synths through eroded, evocative sonic architecture. Infrasonik.com even hosts video tutorials of Ableton's loop-slicing, Drum Racks, and assorted shortcuts, which helps explain the greater potential of these sounds when fed through EFX-chained, clipping-controlled "machines." Install the download and immediately dial in real-time tweaks with embedded devices. As an artist with releases on Warp, Soma, Klang, and more, Finlow makes classic electro as digested by The Black Dog and Autechre in the early '90s, not what the term has come to mean in a blog/big-room house context. Grain is what makes this style, not breaks it. Tempo-locked in the background of a set, these loops can offer chillingly adrenalized atmosphere. *Tony Ware*

MSRP: \$39.95; infrasonik.com

### PIONEER HDJ-2000 PRO DJ HEADPHONES

For the latest addition to their high-end DJ headphone line, Pioneer pulls out a lot of stops. A frequency response of 5 Hz to 30,000 Hz, extremely solid build, 50mm drivers, a max power input of 3,500 mW, a built-in mono/stereo switch for easy monitoring... the list goes on. But what makes these cans particularly special, at least for my ears, is their level of uncompromised comfort. The HDJ-2000s' flexible leather is soft to the touch and stays pain-free for extended sessions, while the internal memory-foam padding offers maximum comfort and impeccable isolation. And considering they weigh only 290 grams, they're versatile for wearing just about anywhere—in a pro studio situation or not. Winners all around. *Brett Ashley*

MSRP: \$349; pioneerprodj.com



## THE NEW SOUNDS OF LATIN MUSIC

Los Amigos Invisibles



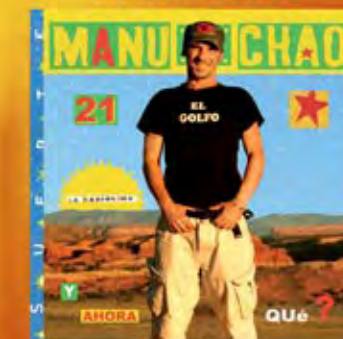
"Commercial"

Mexican Institute Of Sound



"Soy Sauce"

Manu Chao



"La Radiolina"

Zizek



"ZZK Sound Vol.2"

amazon.com

NACIONALRECORDS.COM

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## THE LEGENDS

### THE LEGENDS Over And Over

The first single "Seconds away" was described as "The noisiest pop single to ever come out of Sweden" and created a huge buzz worldwide - no.1 at Elbo.ws for 3 weeks!

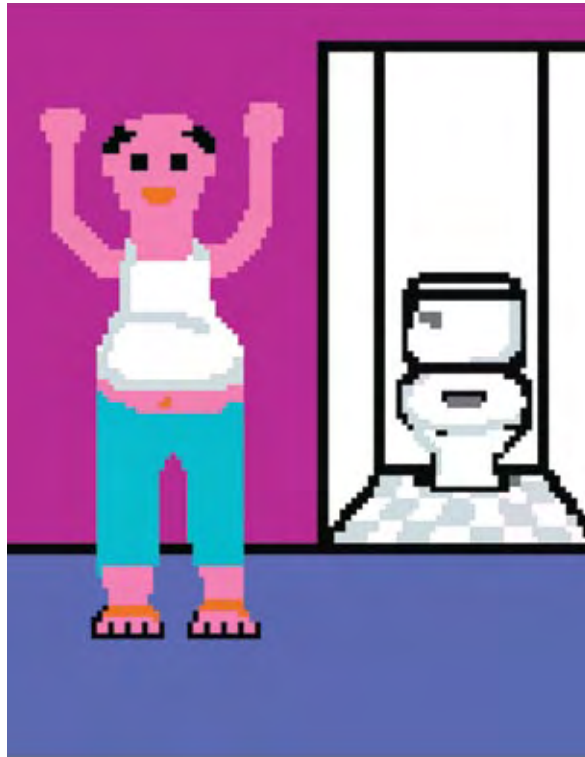
"The noise is almost overbearing, but like a Tarantino movie, it compels you to handle it for the sake of its accompanied beauty." POPDRIVEL

Fans of Animal Collective, My Bloody Valentine, M83, Panda Bear, Stereolab and The Jesus and Mary Chain - look no further! Guest appearances by Karolina Komstedt (Club 8), Philip Ekström (The Mary Onettes), Liane Moccia (Tralala) and more.

Listen at: [www.labrador.se/overandover](http://www.labrador.se/overandover)  
Available at: [www.iTunes.com/thelegends](http://www.iTunes.com/thelegends)







## LITTLE GAMES, WEIRD IDEAS

ESCHEWING THE CONSOLES FOR A QUICK FIX OF ONLINE GAMING.

WORDS RYAN RAYHILL

While the consoles and PCs get most of the glory in the world of games, there is an ever-growing culture of small-time indie companies and homebrewed Flash titles that, while tiny in scale and retro in presentation, play on big ideas that sometimes even games that cost millions to produce gloss over. *XLR8R* takes a gander at some of the best on the 'net.

### BLOODY FUN DAY

urbansquall.com

This simple strategy title hearkens back to 16-bit sprite goodness. It puts you in the position of one of three variations of Death him/herself as you harvest the souls of various creature types without letting your own lifeforce (deathforce?) dwindle. Ultimately, *Bloody Fun Day* begs the question, "Can even the Grim Reaper resist the adorable allure of cute and cuddly critters?" The answer is yes—yes, he can.

### THE MAJESTY OF COLORS

ludusnovus.net

About as weird and wonderful as they get, *The Majesty of Colors* starts off with the following prologue: "Last night I dreamed I was an immense beast, floating in darkness. I knew nothing of the surface world until I fell in love with the majesty of

colors..." Heavy. Playing as an undersea leviathan, you must guide your tentacles to either help or harm everyone on the beach—from children in floaties to divers out to kill you. With a hauntingly simplistic soundtrack and multiple endings, *Majesty of Colors* will leave you scratching your head in wonderment for some time.

### DON'T LOOK BACK

distractionware.com

If you can imagine *Pitfall*, but way more somber and creepy, then you can get an idea of what *Don't Look Back* is all about. Playing on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, you must take your little pixel man to the Underworld as you avoid many snakes and spiders along the way. However, you may be your own worst enemy, as the designers took the title of the game very seriously. Bonus: This one can also be played offline.

### YOU HAVE TO BURN THE ROPE

mazapan.se

*You Have to Burn the Rope* puts a twist on the 8-bit-esque platformer. You take the role of a bowler-wearing, marshmallow-like little gentleman who throws axes and must traverse one short dungeon to defeat one boss, the Grinning Colossus. There

are a couple ways to do this, but the easiest is to just pay attention to the title of the game (sensing a pattern here?). The game presents text hints to you the whole way through and you can't die. Simple, addictive, and weird. It's also worth mentioning that this dev offers a *Dance Dance*-type game that features a Viking with his cock out and a title that involves not making direct eye-contact on public transportation.

### DON'T SHIT YOUR PANTS

kongregate.com/games

Yet another game that takes its title seriously, *Don't Shit Your Pants* is both the name of the game and about all the instruction you are going to get with this one. Playing similarly to old Sierra titles, *DSYP* puts you in the role of a schlub resembling Carl from *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* who is only 40 seconds away from a deuce disaster. The only things you have to work with to accomplish your goal are a door, the clothes on your back, and good old common sense. So, like the old Sierra games, looking around and trying everything is the only way out of your backdoor problems. The game offers several different achievements that reward different outcomes. Get them all and you become the Shit King. Really.



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XLR8R PICKS THE HOTTEST VIDEOGAMES AND GEAR OF THE MONTH.

WORDS RYAN RAYHILL



Blockbuster season approacheth! Robots! Mutants! More robots! But why give your hard-earned bailout money to those Hollywood fatcats? Give it to the long-suffering videogame industry. Hasn't Silicon Valley always been there for you?

Ooooo, you could always give it to both, as this month sees plenty of movie-to-game tie-ins, most of which are abhorrent. But not our first entry, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (Activision; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii), which features everyone's favorite grumpy mutant, Hugh Jackman provides the voice of the slicey-dicey anti-hero as he battles comic-book baddies in fury of hair and claws à la *God of War*. While most movie-to-game adaptations are quickly cobbled together and look like crap, *Wolverine* is perhaps the most gorgeous effort we've seen for the genre yet.

Our next movie game is no slouch in the looking-good department either. *Terminator: Salvation* (Warner Bros.; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii) takes all the metallic fury of the big screen and gives us the firepower to wipe out our artificial nemeses in a hail of bullets and explosions, third-person style. Taking place between the events of *Terminator 3* and *Salvation*, the game puts you in the boots of rapper Common's character, Barnes, as well as that angry guy from the internet who was also in that other movie with that one dead guy, Rose McGowan also lends her sultry pipes to game-exclusive character Angie Salter. Play it! It's fucking distracting!

You see, the great thing about WWII wasn't just the creation of war bonds, Rosie the Riveter, or the atomic bomb. No! It's that we can relive all those glory years through the wonder of interactive entertainment. No one knows this better than the folks behind *Battlestations: Pacific* (Eidos; Xbox, PS3), who take us to the exotic Pacific Theater of War where you can play as either the American forces bent on wiping out the island-hopping Japanese or play as the Japanese in a "what if" scenario that sees them through a victory at Midway and all the way to a full assault on the good ol' US of A. Experimental vehicles, weather effects, and online multiplayer round out this unique take on the well-tread source material.

Speaking of the Japanese, they sure are way more wacky and adorable these days than they were during WWII, aren't they? There is no better proof than this month's *Patapon 2* (Sony; PSP). Last year's *Patapon* mixed rhythm and strategy with addictive gameplay and a killer soundtrack; plus, its dancing tribe of one-eyed warriors charmed the pants off damn near everyone who played it. The sequel takes the lil' guys and strands them on an all new island with old enemies, who you must actually work in tandem with to defeat an all-new threat, the dreaded Akumapon! New units such as the flying Toripon and Ham-Fisted Robopon will be available as you join in the chant.

Not sick of *Guitar Hero* yet? Metallica certainly hopes not! This month sees the release of the band's own version of the biggest name in music games, *Guitar Hero: Metallica* (Activision; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii), featuring dozens of their classic tunes like "Hit the Lights" and "Master of Puppets," as well as tracks from acts the band admires, including Slayer, Motörhead and The Sword. While every member of the band will be rendered in the game (including some of their friends), we are still morbidly holding out hope for a Cliff Burton avatar. Ever see that 1985 live video of him bass soloing into "For Whom the Bell Tolls"? Yeah, that dude ruled.

If you would rather rock a sweatband and plum-smugglers than denim and leather then give *Virtua Tennis 2009* (Sega; Xbox 360, PS3) a try. Featuring over 20 of the biggest names in tennis—from Venus Williams to Roger Federer—the latest in the best-selling title also allows for all-new arenas and create-a-player options, as well as the opportunity to compete for the officially licensed Davis Cup. Had I known during my seventh-grade tennis lessons that I could have gotten myself in a videogame and been paid millions by swatting a ball over a net, I may might have tried harder. Oy, what a racket!

1. X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE
2. TERMINATOR: SALVATION
3. BATTLESTATIONS: PACIFIC
4. GUITAR HERO: METALLICA

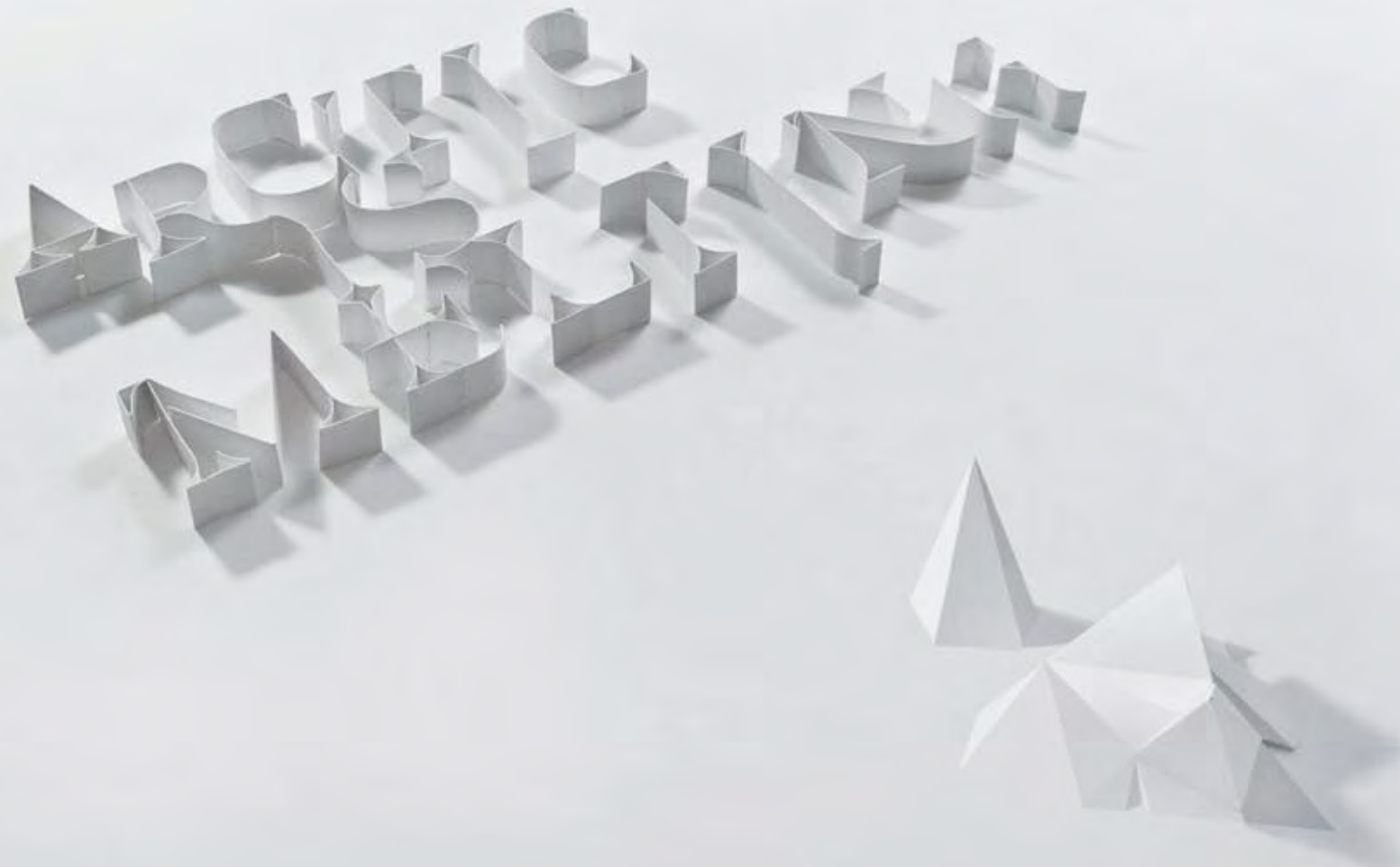


## VIS-ED

# Julien Vallée

A PIECE OF PAPER IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS FOR  
THIS RISING CANADIAN DESIGN STAR.

**Left:**  
"Arctic is Melting,"  
exclusive  
for *XLRR*, 2009



Move over, origami cranes. Artist Julien Vallée has discovered new and crazy ways to manipulate colored paper to create full-on fantasy worlds.

Aside from having a great eye for color and shape and a mind for novel concepts, Vallée uses his work—which often includes a combination of graphic design, installation, motion graphics, and animation—to make you look at everyday objects in a new light.

At the age of 25, Vallée has already been featured in four design books from Gestalten, including designing the cover art for *Tangible: High Tough Visuals*. And it doesn't stop there—the *New York Times*, MTV, and Kanye West have also come calling for his unique design signature. By the time you read this, the boy wonder should be back in his native Quebec after a stint living in Berlin and a recent gallery show in the south of France. We caught the young artist up late at night, and asked him some questions about form and function.

[jvallee.com](http://jvallee.com)





**Above:**  
Promo for MTV-One UK, 2008. Art direction by Julien Vallée with Dixon-Baxi; photography by Simon Duhamel.

**Opposite:**  
"Do It Without Thinking of Critics," 2008. Art direction and design by Julien Vallée with Karim Zariffa.

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Outaouais, around 200 km from Montreal, in Quebec. It is not a small town but art is not something which prevails. I was more into the music scene, playing guitar in punk and ska bands. Then I moved to Montreal in 2004 to study graphic design, and decided to establish myself there.

**What's your favorite food?**

I like almost every kind of food as long as it doesn't have a jelly texture, but I especially love Asian food.

**Your first name means "youthful." Do you think this describes you?**

If it doesn't describe me entirely, it's a characteristic that I try to keep. I think that some people get bored of a lot of things when they grow older and I don't

want to be one of them. Maybe there are some things that you get used to after some time, but I try to look at everything with a young eye.

**Why did you move to Berlin?**

I moved here mainly because of the city and the art scene. I also wanted to come here to take some time to look back at the work I've done in the last two years, and think about the kind of projects and approach in graphic design I want to develop in the future. For me, traveling is the greatest source of inspiration because you're more attentive to the environment. I pay attention to everything that surrounds me. I don't know if coming here directly changed my work, but it has for sure affected my opinion on things and enlarged my vision.

**You recently went on a program helmed by famous graphic designer/typographer Stefan Sagmeister. What was the biggest thing you learned from him?**

I think one of Stefan's greatest qualities is that he knows how to speak and to express ideas. I think that this is something that relates to our everyday work in graphic design—to be able to communicate well and precisely. Other than that, he is a really tall man.

**What are the particular joys and difficulties of working with paper?**

I think the joy is to transform a single flat sheet of paper into an object that can communicate something. I love manual work, and paper is something cheap that you can buy more or less anywhere. When you're finished, you can recycle almost the entire piece. Because paper is already



**Below:**  
Paper sculpture for *Illustrative Zürich* show, 2008



a material itself, with its own properties and particularities, the hardest challenge is to be able to create an image that we can understand first, and see as a paper work second. It's important to not let the paper be the message itself, but only a medium to communicate it.

**Do you usually use a particular kind of paper?**

I usually use Mayfair paper when I'm in Montreal but I'll use anything I can get that seems to react well to the folding.

**What do you find the most fun to draw?**

I like to draw abstract shapes. I like to draw simple shapes and to just continue until it creates something complex.

**What has been the most gratifying project you've done?**

I think I'm still searching for this one. I want to do projects for organizations or groups of people that are working for real causes, like the World Wildlife Fund.

**A few times you have created pieces that are a tableau of all your personal items. What do you think someone would know about you from looking at all those things, and what did you learn from the process?**

It's true that these were personal items, but if people are looking at these to try to analyze the kind of person I am, they totally missed the point. This exercise was really to put any objects surrounding me into the same composition on the same

level. I wanted to take all these things and look at them and think, "Hey, I have these things all around me every day and I am not even thinking about why I have these." We should be sensitive to our surroundings and try to get some inspiration from them. That was what the exercise was about.

**Who is one artist, living or dead, with whom you would really like to collaborate?**

I am a fan of the work of Saul Bass. The project I would have liked to work on the most is the opening credits of *Anatomy of a Murder*.

**What kind of music do you listen to while you work?**

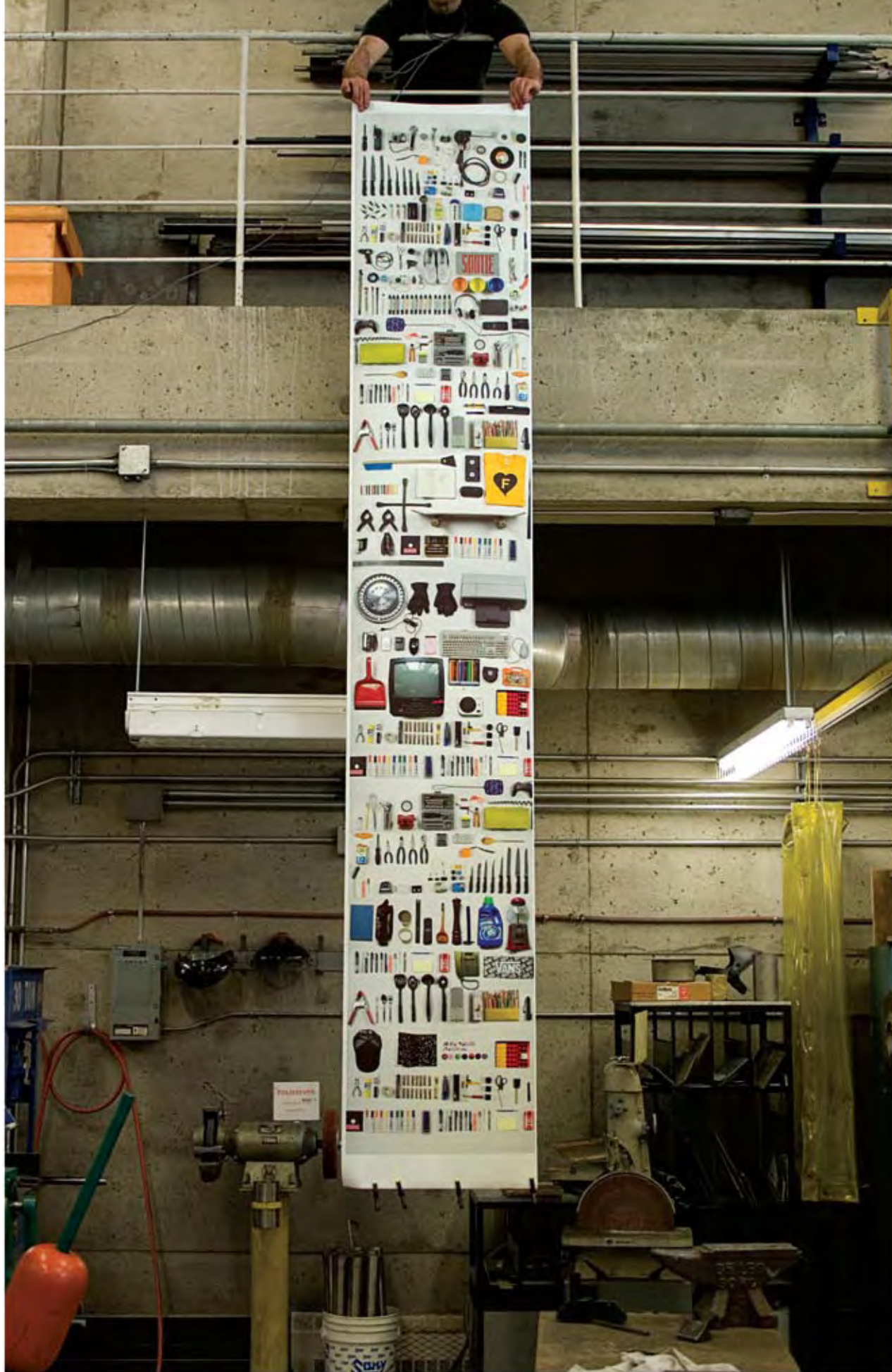
It really depends on the mood, time of the

**Opposite:**

Cover of *Tangible - High Touch Visuals* (Die Gestalten Verlag), 2008. Photography by Simon Duhamel.







**Left:**  
24"x140" banner, 2007, from  
Tangible - High Touch Visuals  
(DGV)

**Below:**  
Animated branding for  
The New York Times  
Magazine, 2009



day, status of the project, or last concert I've been to. I like mostly every type of music, from old punk to electronic, anti-folk to hip-hop.

**How long does it take you to do one of your stop-motion animations? Do you find the whole process exciting, or are there parts of it you dread?**

It always depends on the project, but it's usually a long process because you want to make sure that every frame is perfect. There are always some parts that are more difficult and that you feel like you're wasting a lot of time on. Lighting, for example, is always hard. You need to find the best place to make the animation and make sure that the light is constant to avoid flickering in the image. But I love this technique, and it's something

that you can do without a lot of material. For me, one of the best parts is when you start animating and you put it all together in the computer and see if you had it right or not.

**Tell me about your favorite pair of shoes.** I prefer to be barefoot!

**Many of your projects seem elaborately thought out. Do you spend a lot of time on sketches or in your brain before you start working, or do you just kind of go for it?** There are always some unofficial guidelines that I follow as a process, but it's often different from one project to another, and I think that's the fun of it. I think that changing the way I work for each project helps me try new things, recycle myself, and prevents me from being stuck in a sphere of comfort. If

everything is planned from the beginning to the end, there is only the production process left, and I like to leave some place for change and new ideas. But I usually always start with sketches or a list of keywords. In fact, the only thing I know when I start a project is that there must be a result at the end.



# TEKNOPOLIS

As the MUTEK festival turns 10, it sheds its high-brow image for a balance of thinking and dancing.



THE FIELD, LIVE AT MUTEK 2008

**OVER THE COURSE OF ITS 10 YEARS IN EXISTENCE, MONTREAL'S MUTEK FESTIVAL HAS ASSERTED ITSELF AS NORTH AMERICA'S PREEMINENT ANNUAL EVENT FOR ELECTRONIC MUSIC EXPERIMENTATION AND COLLABORATION.**

Whether it's setting up an operating room for Matmos to fully perform *A Chance to Cut is a Chance to Cure* or hosting the monumental debut of Narod Niki (the eight-man techno live performance boasting the likes of Richie Hawtin, Monolake, Daniel Bell, and Luciano), MUTEK has not-so-quietly set the stage for other festivals like Decibel and Communikey to humbly follow in its footsteps. On the occasion of MUTEK's 10th anniversary, we spoke with founder Alain Mongeau about its philosophy and its impact. *Ken Taylor*

**XLR8R: What do you think MUTEK has achieved?**

Alain Mongeau: One of the characteristics that was always different was the fact that the festival features, like, 98% live acts. We wanted to put the focus on the creative process and on the artists themselves, trying to [inject] some form of recognition and credibility into their field of work. So the party factor wasn't the main drive of the festival; it was more an attempt to keep the creative force in the early rave and techno years alive, inviting it to evolve also.... It seems that just about everyone who's dealt with the festival, be it as an artist or a festivalgoer, has developed a strong

sense of attachment and identification with it. There's probably a series of factors: a good sense of timing, the fact that we're based in Montreal and that the city itself is quite unique... or maybe we've just been playing our cards right, maintaining a clear editorial line with high standards of quality.

**When did you discover there was a need for MUTEK?**

My first draft for the MUTEK festival was made on paper in 1997, the same year that I started doing the Media Lounge with the Festival of New Cinema and New Media (FCMM). That first edition of the Media Lounge was magical, revealing the embryo of a community, because it brought together a lot of people that were all working in relative isolation in Montreal. A lot of it was driven by multimedia art and electronic music, which weren't a natural fit within the context of a film festival like the FCMM. But I continued pushing things until the opportunity for putting MUTEK on showed up. During the launch of the Ex-Centris complex in June '99, I presented a four-day event called LOGINO.O, which turned out to be a sort of beta version of the MUTEK festival, with artists such as Pole and Porter Ricks performing. The rest is history.

**Has the festival's philosophy changed over its 10 years?**

I think the festival has remained pretty consistent in its approach. The main thing that we tried to avoid was to

be pigeonholed, while also trying to broaden the reach of the festival. When we started, we made a point of positioning the festival with a pretty sharp focus, which made it feel very serious, something that would help distinguish its content from what was being associated with club culture at the time. We wanted to be taken seriously, and we managed so well that we actually ended up scaring people off. So part of MUTEK's karma has always been to fight this image of a high-brow event. But at the roots, the festival remains the same in its quest for creative talent, for tracking the mutations and evolutions of the field of electronic music and digital creativity.

**Are there things you would have done differently if given a chance to go back to MUTEK's early years?**

The only thing maybe would've been to start MUTEK when I first thought about it in 1997. I think the general state of the world was more favorable to launch an event then than in the 2000s. MUTEK has had it rough pretty much all the way, financially. On the other hand, maybe it's better when you can't take anything for granted, as it keeps you on your toes, forcing you to revisit your deep motivations all the time.

MUTEK.ORG



XLR8R TV EPISODES FROM OUR RECENT TRIP TO MUTEK LIVE AT XLR8R.COM/127EXTRAS.

XLR8R (ISSN 1526-4246) is published monthly with bimonthly issues in January/February and July/August for \$20 a year by Amalgam Media, Inc., 3180 18th St. #207, San Francisco, CA 94110. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to XLR8R, 3180 18th St. #207, San Francisco, CA 94110.

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